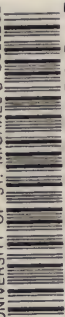


UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



3 1761 02191161 5

~~3650 Wells Street
Windsor, Ontario
N9C 1T9~~

*This book belongs to the
Monastery of Our Lady of Charity
of Toronto. Sandwich 1932*



SAINT THERESA

L I F E
OF
S A I N T T E R E S A,

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH, BY

THE REV. JOHN DALTON.

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

PUBLISHED WITH THE APPROBATION OF THE
RT. REV. BISHOP OF PHILADELPHIA.

PETER F. CUNNINGHAM & SON,
825 *Arch Street, Philadelphia.*



PERMISSU SUPERIORUM



Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1870, by
PETER F. CUNNINGHAM,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States,
in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

P R E F A C E

TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

The Life of St. Teresa, written by herself, is now, for the first time, presented in the English language to the American readers. The preface by the translator, Rev. John Dalton, of London, and which is here given, leaves but little to be said by the American publisher.

Among the lives of so many eminent servants of God, few have been autobiographies. St. Augustine, perhaps alone, in his confessions, has preceded St. Teresa. This difference, however, exists between those holy writers, that whilst the great Bishop of Hippo has left us his Confessions, as a testimony of God's wonderful mercies towards himself, the blessed Teresa wrote her life in obedience to the commands of her confessor, and to explain the marvels of God's providence in her regard.

If the sixteenth century was marked by the fearful heresies of Luther, Calvin, Munzer, John of Leyden, and so many others, whose

shoreless doctrines inundated society with so many evils—during that very period, the church seemed more than ordinarily fruitful with holy and learned men, and institutions of the most beneficial character sprang up in every direction. In that eventful century, arose the institute of St. Ignatius, giving to the church her brightest, and most learned children, the Jesuits. Then were seen in England, Sir Thomas Moore, Bishop Fisher, and Cardinal Pole. In Italy, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Philip Neri, and Leo the Tenth, the patron of learning, and the fine arts. Whilst Spain gave to the church the great Ximenes, Sts Ignatius, and Xavier, Borgio, St. John of the Cross, and the no less wonderful St. Teresa.

Seldom is the holy recluse an interesting writer, or a pleasing author. Those virtues which withdraw one from the world, and forbid its enjoyments, seem not always the best calculated to form literary habits. St. Teresa, however, affords an exception. Her writings evidence talents of a high order, and her numerous letters attest a command of feeling and expressions not only interesting, but instructive. Her great power, however, lay in her wonderful capacity for prayer, and the

facility with which she explains its gradation and efficacy.

We must not expect, in a work of this exalted character, in which the mysterious dealings of God with his Saints are so familiarly treated, to be able to understand or fully appreciate her sublime, and, at times, supernatural language ; but we can admire her piety and humility, and learn to adore the providence of that God whose wonders and mercies are so great. Her constitution, naturally weak, and her body so taxed by physical suffering, still endured beyond the ordinary range of human life. This great servant of God lived sixty-seven years, forty-seven of which she spent in the severest exercises of penitence and prayer. Her long and severely exercised life in the service of her God, should tend to correct that overweening anxiety on the part of so many modern Christians, that will not suffer the slightest encroachment upon those gratifications which are now deemed so lawful by a deceitful world.

J. P. D.

FEAST OF ST. PHILIP NERI, 1860.



TO THE MOST EMINENT AND MOST REVEREND
NICHOLAS,

CARDINAL OF THE HOLY ROMAN CHURCH,
ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER, &c.

MY LORD CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP,—

Your kindness in allowing me the honor of dedicating this translation to your Eminence, calls for the expression of my sincere gratitude. It seems fitting that a translation of St. Teresa's Life should, in some way, have the approbation of your Eminence, who was born in the same noble and Catholic land that gave birth to the Saint, whose wondrous Life is now presented to the public.

Seville was one of the cities in which St. Teresa founded one of her convents, where, no doubt, the spirit of the holy Foundress still lives among her loving and devoted Daughters.

And your Eminence can well testify how, in spite of wars, revolutions, and the insidious attacks of infidelity, Religion has still maintained her ground; while, in the midst of the deepest poverty, and of innumerable snares and temptations, the bishops, clergy, and Religious, have exhibited to the world models of the most enduring patience, and of the most exalted virtues.

Deeply, too, has Spain sympathized with our late afflictions and persecutions, and with your Eminence in particular, for all the insults and calumnies which you have had to

endure, but which have been borne with such fortitude and meekness.

And just as days of joy and gladness are now beginning to dawn upon Spain, even so do we rejoice that your Eminence has lived to see the long-wished-for day, when our own beloved Land has at length been restored to her ancient and sacred Hierarchy, which we are confident no 'penal Laws' will ever be able again to overthrow.

May St. Teresa, whose noble soul so often sighed for the conversion of heretical lands, intercede for our own distracted country, so long separated from the See of Peter. May she intercede for your Eminence also, that length of days may be granted you to labor amongst us, with fruit a hundred-fold.

I have the honor to be, my Lord Cardinal, your Eminence's most humble and respectful Servant,

JOHN DALTON.

CONTENTS.

	Page
CHAPTER I.	
The Saint mentions how our Lord began to excite her soul, in her childhood, to virtuous actions, and what great help her pious parents were to her, ...	47
CHAPTER II.	
She relates how she began to be fond of reading romances, and how necessary it is for youth to keep good company, ...	50
CHAPTER III.	
She mentions how good company was the means of re-awakening virtuous desires within her, and how our Lord began to give her light to discover her errors, ...	55
CHAPTER IV.	
She relates how our Lord assisted her in forcing herself to take the religious habit, and with how many infirmities His Divine Majesty began to afflict her, ...	59
CHAPTER V.	
She continues to relate the painful infirmities she endured, and the patience our Lord gave her, etc., ...	66
CHAPTER VI.	
She mentions how much she owed our Lord for giving her conformity to His will in such great afflictions; and how she also chose the glorious St. Joseph for her patron, etc., ...	73
CHAPTER VII.	
She shows by what degrees she went on losing the favors which our Lord had shown her, and how wicked her life began to be, ...	79
CHAPTER VIII.	
She mentions what great good her soul received by not having entirely given up her method of prayer; also, what an excellent remedy prayer is for gaining what we have lost, ...	92
CHAPTER IX.	
She declares by what means our Lord began to awaken her soul, and to enlighten her in such great darkness, ...	99
CHAPTER X.	
The Saint begins to mention the favors our Lord bestowed upon her in prayer, and she speaks of the manner in which we may help ourselves, etc., ...	104

CHAPTER XI.

She declares in what the fault consists of not loving God with perfection in a short time; this she begins to declare by a comparison, containing four degrees of prayer, . . . 110

CHAPTER XII.

The Saint continues her discourse on the first degree of prayer, 119

CHAPTER XIII.

She continues the first degree of prayer, and gives advice against certain temptations, which are sometimes brought on by the devil, ... 123

CHAPTER XIV.

The Saint begins to explain the second degree of prayer, . . . 134

CHAPTER XV.

She continues the same subject, and gives some advice how persons are to act in the prayer of quiet, etc., . . . 140

CHAPTER XVI.

The Saint speaks on the third degree of prayer, . . . 149

CHAPTER XVII.

She continues the same subject, on the third degree of prayer, etc., ... 154

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Saint speaks on the fourth degree of prayer, . . . 159

CHAPTER XIX.

The Saint begins to declare the effects which this degree of prayer produces in the soul, etc., ... 167

CHAPTER XX.

The Saint treats of the difference which exists between union and rapture, etc., ... 176

CHAPTER XXI.

The Saint continues and finishes this last degree of prayer, 190

CHAPTER XXII.

The Saint shows how secure a way it is for those who give themselves to contemplation, not to raise their minds to high things unless our Lord raise them himself, and how the humanity of Christ may serve as a means of reaching the highest degree of contemplation, ... 196

CHAPTER XXIII.

- The Saint resumes the history of her life, and tells us how she began to aim at greater perfection, and the means she employed for this purpose, ... 207

CHAPTER XXIV.

- The Saint continues the history of her life, and tells us how her soul was improved after she began to obey her confessor, 216

CHAPTER XXV.

- She treats of the way how those words and speeches are to be understood, which God communicates to the soul without any voice or sound being heard, ... 220

CHAPTER XXVI.

- The same subject is continued. The Saint mentions many things which happened to her, ... 232

CHAPTER XXVII.

- The Saint mentions another way by which our Lord instructs a soul, and makes her understand His will. She speaks also of a wonderful vision she had, etc. 236

CHAPTER XXVIII.

- The Saint speaks of the great favors our Lord bestowed upon her, and how he appeared to her for the first time, . . . 247

CHAPTER XXIX.

- The Saint continues the same subject, and mentions certain great favors which our Lord showed her, and what He said to comfort and console her, etc., ... 257

CHAPTER XXX.

- She resumes the history of her life, and mentions how our Lord remedied many of her troubles by means of St. Peter of Alcantara, etc., ... 265

CHAPTER XXXI.

- She treats of certain exterior temptations and representations of the devil, etc., ... 277

CHAPTER XXXII.

- The Saint mentions how our Lord was pleased to show her, in spirit, the place which had been prepared for her in hell, and which she had deserved by her sins, ... 290

CHAPTER XXXIII.

- The Saint continues the history of the foundation of St. Joseph's Monastery, etc., ... 299

	Page.
CHAPTER XXXIV.	
She mentions how she was obliged to leave Avila, and the reason thereof, being commanded to go by her superior to comfort a lady there, who was much afflicted, ...	308
CHAPTER XXXV.	
The Saint continues the history of the foundation of St. Joseph's Monastery, etc., ...	319
CHAPTER XXXVI.	
The Saint, continuing the same subject, informs us how the Monastery of St. Joseph was at last founded, ...	326
CHAPTER XXXVII.	
The Saint mentions the great benefit she received from other heavenly favors.—Many particulars are given respecting her ecstasies and revelations, ...	341
CHAPTER XXXVIII.	
The Saint mentions some great favors which our Lord was pleased to show her, in acquainting her with certain secrets of Heaven, and by giving her visions and revelations, etc.,	348
CHAPTER XXXIX.	
The Saint gives an account of other miraculous graces and sublime visions with which she was favored by our Lord, . .	362
CHAPTER XL.	
The Saint continues the same discourse, and relates some more of the great favors our Lord showed her; she then finishes the account of her life, ...	375

APPENDIX.

I. Historical notice of Sir Tobie Mathews, Knt. . . .	387
II. Notice of Mr. Abraham Woodhead, ...	394
III. Canonizatio Sanctæ Theresiæ Virginis, ...	407
IV. Hymn of Saint Teresa, ...	419
V. Canticle of Saint Teresa after Communion, . . .	426
VI. Letter to Father Pedro Ibanez, ...	430

P R E F A C E

T O T H E S E C O N D E D I T I O N .

It is with an humble diffidence, united with a sincere desire to make the works of the glorious St. Teresa more and more known in this country, that I now present the public with a Second edition of the Saint's Life written by herself.

To some persons, whose judgment demands respect, the translation of such a life into English may appear quite uncalled-for. "How few," it may be said, "can understand it! It is too dry, too extraordinary, too mystical for the generality of readers. It may do a great deal of harm to some persons. We want something more simple, practicable, and intelligible." Such is the substance of the objections which I have sometimes heard urged against St. Teresa's Life. This is not now the place to answer them, though how far the translation of such and such lives of the saints may or may not be desirable, is certainly a subject which requires much consideration. Every one is entitled to hold and maintain his own opinion on the matter.

In my humble judgment, I consider—at least I earnestly hope—that the translation of St. Teresa's life will do a great deal more good to many souls than harm. This Second Edition being called for by the public, shows an increasing desire to become acquainted with the means whereby she arrived at such a height of perfection. Those means are within the reach of all, when aided by God's powerful grace. St. Teresa was no *enthusiast*. Amidst all her visions and raptures—which she never desired or sought after—she perpetually and emphatically inculcated humility, poverty, obedience, mortification, cheerfulness, purity, resignation to

the Divine will, and an ardent love of God, &c. Her judgment and common sense were wonderful.

Earnestly do I hope, then, that my readers may derive profit and delight from the perusal of this wondrous life. The works of St. Teresa, we all know, are highly prized and extensively read in Catholic countries. Year after year they are becoming more and more dear to every devout soul. And here I cannot too strongly recommend the new French translation of the saint's works, lately undertaken by the Rev. Father Bouix, of the Society of Jesus.* It is certainly most admirable. The good father visited all those places in Spain that are consecrated by St. Teresa ; and above all, he had the happiness of inspecting the autograph manuscripts of the Saint's writings, and of comparing the printed editions with them.

The notes in the body of the translation are exceedingly valuable and interesting. To have embodied only a *part* of them in the present volume was found impossible, without at the same time increasing the price of the work, which the publisher did not wish to risk.

I trust D'Andilly's Jansenistical translation will now be superseded altogether by that of Father Bouix's.

JOHN DALTON.

NORTHAMPTON,

Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1854.

* Four volumes have already appeared—"The Life," "The Foundations," The "Way of Perfection," and "The Letters."

P R E F A C E

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

To many it may seem presumption in *me* to have attempted a translation of the Life of St. Teresa. I candidly acknowledge that I myself have had the same opinion, for I know nothing whatever about "Mystical Theology;" and though I have read several writers on the subject, such as Scaramelli, Cardinal Bona, St. John of the Cross, Father Baker, the Life of Balthasar Alvarez, &c.; yet I must confess, that after all, I have very imperfect notions of the matter. "How then," I often asked myself, "can you venture to translate a Life which is so difficult, so sublime, so extraordinary, so different from the ordinary lives of the saints?" Such were my thoughts; and so far did they prevail on me, that I often resolved to abandon the intention of translating the Life, hoping that some one else, more competent than myself, might, perhaps, sooner or later, undertake the work. Still, with all my diffidence, I felt a secret desire not to abandon the intention altogether; and I was encouraged therein, by the very kind manner in which both Bishop Wareing and Bishop Ullathorne, as well as several priests, whose judgment I valued, spoke of my intention to give a translation of the Saint's Life.

I accordingly commenced, and was highly delighted with the novelty of the undertaking. The edifying and interesting account the Saint gives of her early years, and of the means employed by God gradually to draw her from the vanities of the world, quite enchanted me, especially as the first ten Chapters are so very easy to translate. But when I was led into the inmost sanctuary of the Saint, and heard words uttered, "*Arcana verba, quæ non licet homini loqui;*"

secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter ; when visions, and raptures, and divine colloquies, and all the wonders of the supernatural life came before me, and were related in abstruse words, and in a language I had never been accustomed to, then I was indeed strongly tempted to stop : and yet I did not. And why not ? Because, in spite of the many difficulties I met with, there was a something so charming, though so sublime, in the Saint's narration ; the heroic sentiments with which her Life abounds ; the heavenly virtues of obedience, mortification, humility, self-denial, and divine love, which the Saint inculcates in almost every page ; the admirable rules she lays down for the guidance of souls in the way of perfection ; the excellent maxims of a spiritual life, which her holy mouth so frequently uttered ; these, and many other advantages, induced me to persevere. I could not resist the attractions by which I was surrounded.

But many imagine there is nothing "practical" in the Life of St. Teresa, or in any of her other works ; that it is next to impossible to understand her account of the different degrees of supernatural prayer, to which she was raised ; that being continually absorbed in the contemplation of Him whom her soul loved, she wings her flight too high for ordinary mortals to follow ; that she hardly speaks of anything but visions and raptures ; and hence, that her works are useful and intelligible *only* to persons who have attained an eminent spirit of prayer, and of these there must be a very *small* number, even in religious communities.*

Such are some of the prejudices and objections which we sometimes hear urged, and which we know are entertained by many against the works of St. Teresa : but nothing can be more unfounded and erroneous. There is hardly any modern saint who displays more solid judgment and common sense than St. Teresa. She is eminently *practical*. She is all for action, "either to die or to suffer," were the noble words that were always on her lips. "Do you see Teresa of Jesus ?" exclaimed F. Balthasar Alvarez, "what sublime graces has

* See these objections refuted in "L'Esprit de Sainte Thérèse," par M. Eméry, (Pref. xii.)

she not received of God, and yet she is like the most tractable little child, with regard to everything I can say to her!" To speak here of her practical piety, and of those virtues which every one may imitate by the Divine assistance, would be too tedious. Those who have not the opportunity of reading the high eulogium passed upon her by Ribera, Yepes, Palafox, Villefore, Boucher, the Venerable John of Avila, S. Antonio,* and the learned writers of the last magnificent volume of the Bollandists, may form some idea of those virtues which adorned her soul, from the interesting life our own Alban Butler has written of her. Father Faber very justly says, "That she represents the common sense, the discreet enthusiasm of devotion, and the interior life which distinguishes Catholic asceticism and the mysticism of the saints from the fanatical vagaries of the heretics."† As to the *works* of the saint, let us hear the illustrious Bishop Milner speak : "I will venture to assert, that as far as we can pronounce on the opinion of the Church, where no formal decision has taken place, there are, perhaps, no writings that have been more pointedly or more strongly approved of by this unerring judgment, than these of St. Teresa. Her spirit of prayer, and the character of her ascetical works, were not only examined and approved of by the most eminent divines of the age, but also by a constellation of her holy contemporaries, such as St. F. Borgia, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. John of the Cross, and St. Lewis Bertrand, who were the best, because they were experimental judges of the excellency of her 'heavenly doctrine,'‡ for so it is styled by the Church in the prayer inserted in her public liturgy, after a second examination of our Saint's spirit and writings had taken place,"§ &c.

Diego de Yepes says of her works : "That they are written with such simplicity and sublimity, with such sweetness and

* "Vita di Santa Teresa." (*Roma*, 1837.) This life of the Saint is very valuable, and ably drawn up.

† Preface to "Catholic Hymns." (*Burns*, 1849.)

‡ "Cœlestis ejus doctrinæ pabulo nutriamur," &c.

§ Preface to the translation of St. Teresa's "Exclamations." (*London*, 1790.)

beauty of style ; and that what she says penetrates the heart so easily, that it is evident she learnt her doctrine from Heaven, and wrote her works by the particular assistance of the Holy Spirit." This testimony is confirmed by St. Teresa herself in many passages which I might quote ; one, however, will be sufficient :—"As our Lord said to me on one occasion, that many of the things I have mentioned here were not my own invention, but that He, my heavenly Master, told them to me." Lewis de Leon, to whom the Saint's works had been given for examination, and who was a very learned and prudent Father of the Order of St. Dominic, thus speaks of them, in a letter addressed to the Carmelite Nuns of Madrid : "I never saw nor knew the Blessed Mother Teresa of Jesus, while she lived in this world ; but now, when she lives in Heaven, I know her, and do in reality see her continually in two living images of herself, which she left amongst us, viz., her daughters and her books," &c.

How highly does St. Francis of Sales speak of our glorious Saint, in the preface to his treatise on the "Love of God." Bishop Palafox, in a letter to F. Didacus, uses the following remarkable words : "I never knew a person who was devout to St. Teresa, that did not become a spiritual man ; nor did I ever know a spiritual man who read her works, that did not become *more* spiritual, and most devoted to the Saint." S. Antonio, in the fourth volume of his Life of St. Teresa, gives many proofs of the great advantage the works of the Saint are to the faithful.

But it would be superfluous to enter into more details on this part of the subject. Every one knows that St. Teresa's works, and especially her Life, have always been eagerly sought after by the learned and devout, not only among Catholics, but also among Protestants. The many editions which have appeared in Spanish and French prove this truth.

I had at first intended to say something (in this Preface) by way of explanation, respecting those sublime degrees of supernatural prayer to which our Lord was pleased to raise St. Teresa. But when I attempted to clothe my imperfect ideas in words, I found how incompetent I was for such a

task. Being immediately convinced of *my* utter inability to do justice to the subject, I wrote to one of our beloved bishops, who I am sure is quite competent to write a valuable treatise on Mental prayer ; but he declined, through want of time. No other alternative, therefore, was left, but to give, in a few words, the substance of what St. Teresa herself has said on prayer, and to refer the reader to some standard works on the subject. St. Teresa commences, in the tenth Chapter of her Life, to speak of prayer. She says that she began to consider Christ as present in her soul, in the same manner as she had been accustomed to do after communion. From the twentieth year after she had first applied herself to this exercise, she made little use of interior discoursing or reasoning, to inflame her affections, for the intuitive consideration of any object immediately excited in her soul the most ardent acts of divine love, praise, thanksgiving, and compunction. The tenderness of her love, and the deep sense of her own sins and miseries,* constituted her prayer, without her being obliged to have recourse to studied words, or to long reflections in her meditations. "This prayer suspends the soul," she says, "in such a way, that she seems to be wholly out of herself. The will is in the act of loving; the memory seems to be in a manner lost, and the understanding reasons not." The Saint distinguishes four degrees of Mental prayer, comprising the prayer of Quiet, and that of Union. In the former, she represents a soul so perfectly shut up within herself, as to receive no impressions from without, the avenues of the senses and imagination, by which external objects press upon her, being at that time stopped, so that she then converses entirely with God alone. "He who begins this way of prayer (says our Saint, chap. xi.) must imagine that he is beginning to make a garden, for the pleasure and delight of his Lord, though it may be in a very unfruitful soil, full of weeds. It is His Majesty who must now be pleased to plant good herbs, and root up the bad ones. . . . But, by the help of our Lord, we also must

* Though St. Teresa represents herself, through her most wonderful humility, as the most base and wicked of creatures, yet all her confessors declared that she never committed a mortal sin.

be careful, like attentive gardeners, in seeing that these good herbs which are planted may grow, and we must not forget to water them, that so they may not wither, but bring forth sweet-smelling flowers, which may give delight to our Lord, and induce Him often to come into this garden, and regale Himself with the virtues of our soul," &c. She mentions how these plants may be watered in four ways: 1. By drawing water out of a well. 2. By means of a wheel, with little buckets attached to it. 3. Or, by turning a small stream into the garden. and, lastly, the garden is watered when a good shower of rain falls upon it, for then our Lord Himself waters it, without any labor at all of ours. The Saint explains, (in the eleventh Chapter,) these four ways more fully, to which I refer the reader.

In the twelfth Chapter, she says: "In Mystical Theology, the understanding ceases from working, because God suspends it, as I will explain afterwards, if I be able," &c. By the term "suspends," the Saint means, that God represents to the intellect supernatural things in so clear a light, that the soul sees them by an intuitive view, without discoursing or reasoning upon them; and this, too, so strongly, that she is not able to turn her attention to any other object. But this operation is not confined to the intellect alone; it passes on to the *will* also, and inflames it. The understanding becomes strongly fixed on the object which it sees, and is astonished at the clear sight it obtains. The Saint calls this suspension "supernatural," because in it the soul is passive much more than active, though she may at the same time produce acts of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving. The Saint tells us, that we must not desire these suspensions, nor use any efforts to obtain them, "because the devil may bring some illusion upon us." (Chapter xii.)

13 In the thirteenth Chapter, she continues the explanation of the first degree, and gives excellent advice against certain temptations. "His Majesty," she says, "is a very great friend of courageous souls, provided they proceed with humility, and not with any confidence in themselves." Beginners, the Saint remarks, particularly require a learned and experienced director, "for I have met with certain souls,

who have been afflicted and dejected, because he who had the instruction of them wanted experience, and I was very sorry for them." Again, she remarks a little further on: "I consider that a person who exercises prayer, and consults learned men, will never be deceived by illusions of the devil, if he have not a mind to deceive himself. I believe that the devil is greatly afraid of learning, whenever it is accompanied with humility, for he knows that he will be discovered in the end," &c.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth Chapters, the Saint explains still more at length the prayer of Quiet or Recollection, "which is easily perceived by the peace and satisfaction which is felt, accompanied with very great contentment and calmness of the powers, and with the sweetest delight." In Chapter the eighteenth, she begins to speak of the prayer of Union. It would be too long to give here even the substance of what the Saint says on this sublime degree. Alban Butler has a very excellent note on this prayer of Union, which I will take the liberty of quoting at length: "The second, and more sublime prayer is that of Union. By this term is not meant a union of the presence or place, by which God is present to all creatures, nor that of sanctifying grace, by which every just man is a partaker of the friendship of God; but this mystical union is that of the powers of the understanding and will, which, by their vital actions, are closely united to God. The understanding, divested of all corporal images, is penetrated with the clear light and infinite brightness of the divine wisdom, while the will is closely joined to God by the most ardent love, which, like a fire, consumes all earthly affections."* But let us hear the great Saint herself: "The soul being in this state, finds herself almost sinking under a sweet and most excessive delight. She faints, and even the breath and all corporal strength begin to fail, so that the person is then not able so much as to move her hands without great pain. The eyes are also closed, though without there being any intention of shutting them; and when, by accident, they chance to open, the soul

* October 15.

sees nothing distinctly ; and if she should read, she cannot know any of the letters correctly. She sees, indeed, that there are letters, but as the understanding does not give her any assistance, she knows not how to read even if she wished. She hears, but does not understand what she hears. As for speaking, it is vanity so much as to think of any such thing, for she cannot possibly form any words ; and if she could, she could not pronounce them, because all the strength of her body is absolutely lost, on account of the greater increase of tha of the soul, that so she may enjoy her glory the better. However long this prayer may last, it does not put the soul to any kind of inconvenience, at least it never put *me* to any ; nor am I able to remember, that when our Lord showed me this favor, I ever found myself the worse, however weak or unwell I might have been, but rather my health was the more improved thereby. And, indeed, what harm can be done to any one by so great a blessing as this?" (Chapter xviii.) In the nineteenth Chapter, the Saint explains the wonderful *effects* of the prayer of Union. To this Chapter I refer the reader, who, if he cannot understand *all* the sublime words the Saint utters, he will at least learn to admire her wonderful sanctity, that deserved to be so richly rewarded by her beloved Spouse ; and he will, at the same time, be astonished at the most profound humility of the Saint, who became the more humble, the more she was caressed and exalted. It was by the prayer of Union, that she saw in such a clear manner the immense greatness of God, the emptiness of all earthly things, and her own misery ; for she beheld herself covered with imperfections and innumerable sins, (so her tender conscience magnified them,) in such a way, that she exclaimed, "O Lord ! who shall be justified before Thee?"

Such is the short and very imperfect explanation I have given of the prayer of Quiet and Union. The truth is, as St. Teresa herself frequently mentions, few can understand this kind of prayer, but those who have *experienced* it. It may, however, be useful to mention some of the most approved writers on the subject, so that if any one should feel inclined to study the subject, as it were, he may know what

authors to consult. First of all comes the Venerable Father Baker's "Sancta Sophia," which is quite a treasure in itself; besides containing many valuable treatises and rules on prayer, it also gives a translation of F. Balthasar Alvarez's* account of his manner of prayer, which he wrote by the command of his superior. When we remember that Alvarez was confessor to St. Teresa, and that she speaks of him in the highest terms of praise, we shall know how to appreciate what he says on prayer. Father Baker's "Sophia" is certainly *the best* work we have in English on prayer: "nothing is more clear, simple, solid, or profound," as Bishop Ullathorne justly remarks, in a private letter his lordship kindly sent me some time ago.

"Il Direttorio Mistico," by Scaramelli, is, perhaps, the next best treatise, though I must confess it is *very dry*. It is, however, a standard work.

There is an admirable, but scarce work, in French, entitled "Secrets Sentiers," which was composed by a holy man named Barbason. It comprises everything on the subject. I have already mentioned the "Life of Balthasar Alvarez," which is exceedingly useful and edifying.

In German, Gorres has written an historical account of all the principal mystical writers, in a preface to one of the works of Suso. Benedict XIV. has treated the subject with his usual clearness and learning, in his great work "On the Beatification and Canonization of the Saints."

Cardinal Bona's "Via Compedii ad Deum," will also be found very useful. It is written with great unction, solidity, clearness, and learning. Other authors might be added, such as Thomas à Jesu; Dionysius the Carthusian; Gerson; Richard of St. Victor; St. F. of Sales; Harphius; Rusbroschius, Taulerus, Suso, Blossius; "Scala Perfectionis," by F. Walter Hinton; and lastly, the works of St. John of the Cross, which I possess in Spanish, though I have not read them.† I almost forgot to mention, that St. Teresa, in her

* The life of this holy man has been written by Lewis de Ponte or Puente, and translated into French. (*Paris*, 1846.)

† See Father Baker, "On Reading Spiritual Books," &c. (p. 85, cap. iii.)

“Way of Perfection,” lays down many excellent rules for mental prayer; and so also does St. Peter of Alcantara, in his “Golden Treatise on Mental Prayer.”

From the prayer of Union came those wonderful ecstasies and raptures; those impetuosities of the Spirit; those mysterious, yet familiar visions and representations of supernatural objects; words spoken by our Lord to comfort or direct her in her troubles and afflictions; revelations; infused knowledge and understanding of the highest mysteries;—all these, and many other wonders the Saint speaks of so frequently, and with so much sincerity and humility, that we seem at once admitted into Heaven itself,—into the very sanctuary of the Divinity. God seems to have poured out on the blessed soul of Teresa the plenitude of His choicest gifts, so that she might with some degree of justice exclaim with Mary, “Fecit mihi magna qui potens est.” She sees God as clearly as the prophets; she converses with Him as familiarly as the patriarchs did: she speaks of Him as learnedly and sublimely as the Doctors of the Church. It is sufficient for us to remain at the foot of the mountain, while she ascends the top, and hears and sees things “which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard.” Her visions and raptures we are amazed at. But what we admire still more, and what contributes more to our edification, is to see that Teresa is in no way dazzled by such brightness, nor elated by such loving caresses; but rather, the more she is exalted by her beloved Spouse, the more humble, the more fearful does she become. I must refer the reader to the twentieth Chapter of the Saint’s Life, where she mentions the difference between union and rapture. In the latter, she says, “Our Lord catches up the soul, (as we may say,) just as the clouds catch up the vapors from the earth; and so He, taking her wholly up from the earth, the cloud rises up to Heaven and carries her along with it, and He shows her certain things which are prepared for her there.” Again: “In these raptures it does not seem that the soul even animates the body; and so the body itself feels very great trouble, through being deprived of its natural heat; and it seeks to cool itself, though enjoying the most excess-

sive sweetness and delight. Here there is no means of resisting, though in the prayer of Union there is some remedy. . . . But here there is no remedy, nor any help; for the rapture often comes, without our being able to prevent its coming, even in thought. And there comes such a sudden and strong impetuosity, that you feel the cloud raising itself up; or rather, this strong eagle takes you and carries you quite away between its wings," &c. The examples of certain women, who about this time were found to be miserably deluded by the devil and their own wayward imagination, greatly terrified our Saint, though at the same time she was firmly persuaded her favors came from God. Passing over the twenty-first and twenty-second Chapters, which are full of the most sublime narrations, we find St. Teresa resuming the history of her Life in the twenty-third Chapter. She says: "This fear now increased to such a degree, that it made me inquire diligently after some spiritual persons with whom I could speak concerning my troubles, and already I had received some account of such persons."* The first person to whom she opened her mind was a gentleman whose name was Francesco de Salsedo, a married man, who for thirty-eight years had practised mental prayer, together with his virtuous wife. Their piety was an example to the whole country, and St. Teresa bestows on them both the highest praise. This gentleman introduced her to a very learned priest named Gaspar Daza. But both of them, after an examination of our Saint's manner of prayer, expressed their fears to her, and said, "they thought there was an evil spirit in some things, but they could not be certain." This judgment they formed, because they supposed that the extraordinary favors which the Saint received were inconsistent with all the sins and imperfections which she magnified to them. Great was Teresa's affliction and abundant her tears on hearing what they said, though she could not persuade herself she was deluded by the devil. At length the gentle-

* She alludes to the Jesuits, who came into Spain about the year 1553. The Saint always loved the Society of Jesus, because she heard what holy lives the Fathers led: "Era mu aficionada á quien, desolo saber el modo que llevaban de vida y oracion." (Cap. xxiii.)

man above mentioned strongly advised her to consult one of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, (who had lately come into Spain,) and were eminent for their experience in guiding souls. He told her also to make a general confession to the father ; to explain everything to him with candor, and to be very careful in doing whatever he should command or advise her. St. Teresa did so ; and the father assured her, after having heard the account of her life, that her prayer came from God ; he encouraged her not to desist from her present practice ; and exhorted her every day to meditate on some part of our Saviour's passion, besides giving her many other wise and wholesome counsels. "In all things," says the Saint, "it seemed to me that the Holy Spirit spoke by the mouth of this father for the good of my soul."

In 1557, St. Francis Borgia came into Spain. St. Teresa was desired to consult him ; and having done so, he assured her that "the Spirit of God was the author of her prayer," &c. She was comforted by his words. But shortly afterwards he was called away, to the great sorrow of our Saint, for she thought she would never be able to find another like him. Her next director, however, was one according to her own heart,—the venerable servant of God, F. Balthasar Alvarez. He told her that she would do well to beg of our Lord to enlighten her mind, and teach her what He willed her to do, and that for this object she should recite every day, "Veni, Creator Spiritus." While she was once reciting this hymn, she fell so suddenly into a rapture, that she became as it were out of herself ; then she heard these words : "I will not have thee hold conversation with men, but with angels." These words were spoken in the interior of her soul, and terrified her greatly, though on the other hand they afforded her much consolation. Those words were also verified to the letter ; for the Saint assures us that ever after she could not entertain any particular affection for any one, except for those who she thought loved God and wished to serve Him. I refer the reader to the twenty-fourth Chapter. While Balthasar was her director, our Saint suffered most grievous trials and persecutions for about three years. Though it was her earnest desire that all her visions and

raptures should be kept quite secret, yet they soon began to be known, in spite of all her precautions. The world is always censorious,—more inclined to blame than to praise and take one's part. Accordingly, St. Teresa was ridiculed in every place, and censured without mercy. Few had a good opinion of her at first. She was called an enthusiast,—a hypocrite,—and even a devil! She was shunned as something unclean; as one who had dealings with the prince of darkness. Six individuals consulted together, and decided that she was evidently deluded by the devil; and they prevailed on F. Balthasar to command her “not to communicate so frequently; not to live so retired, nor prolong her meditations beyond the usual time,” &c. Her confessor, however, consoled her to the best of his power; bade her not despond, nor lose her courage; for even if she were deluded by the devil, he told her he could not hurt her, so long as she endeavored to advance in obedience, humility, patience, and divine love. One day the Saint fell into a rapture, when her soul was in the greatest affliction, and heard a voice interiorly, uttering these words: “Fear not, daughter, it is I; and I will not forsake thee: do not fear.” Her mind was instantly composed. (See Chapter xxv.)

Passing over many other things for the sake of brevity, but which, I am sure, will be read with the deepest interest in the Life, I must not omit the edifying account the Saint gives us of St. Peter of Alcantara,* in the twenty-seventh Chapter. This great saint visited Avila in 1559, being appointed the commissary of his Order. At that time St. Teresa was suffering the most cruel persecutions from her friends, and even from her confessors, as well as laboring under very severe interior trials from scruples and anxieties. A pious lady, named Guimera d'Ulloa, and an intimate friend of St. Teresa, who was also aware of all her afflictions, obtained leave of the Provincial of the Carmelites for St. Teresa to remain a few days at her house, that so our Saint

* See the Life of this great saint, written by F. John of St. Mary, in 1619, and also by F. Martin of St. Joseph, in 1644: there is likewise an interesting account in Wadding's Annals of the Franciscan Order, and in Alban Butler, (Oct. 19.)

might there have an opportunity of consulting St. Peter of Aleantara. From his own great experience and knowledge of Divine manifestations, he was easily able to understand her, to clear up all her perplexities, and give her the strongest assurance that her prayer and visions, &c., came from the Spirit of God. He even publicly declared, that, next to the truths of religion, "nothing appeared to him more evident than that her soul was conducted by God." The authority of so glorious a saint,—the reputation of his solid judgment and eminent sanctity, gave his decision the greatest weight, and completely turned the scales in favor of our persecuted and afflicted Saint.* Still, the holy father assured her that her troubles were not yet over; for about this time, besides interior troubles and temptations, the blessed mother often met with *exterior* afflictions, and frequently saw devils in most hideous figures; but she always drove them away, either by making the sign of the cross or by holy water. Respecting the latter, the words of the Saint deserve to be remembered: "I have found by experience, that there is nothing from which the devils so certainly fly (so as to return no more,) as from holy water. They also fly from the cross," &c.

In the thirty-second Chapter comes the celebrated and terrible description of hell, which the devils (as our Lord gave her to understand,) had prepared for her on account of her sins; or rather she saw the *place* which she was doomed to inhabit in hell, had not our Lord delivered her; and she also actually felt in her soul the torments of that frightful prison. The different pains she experienced are described with great force and earnestness, as well as the effects produced in her soul by the representation. The impression could never be effaced afterwards: and from that time, she tells us, "she was in very great pain for the many souls of the Lutherans, who are condemned to hell, especially because they were once members of the Church." The impulses she felt thereby to do good to souls, inspired her with the idea of reforming her Order. Having consulted God on the subject,

* See Chapter xxx. Chapters xxviii. and xxix. must be read over very carefully.

His Divine Majesty, one day after she had communicated, commanded her to use all her exertions to accomplish this object, promising her, at the same time, that the monastery should certainly be established, and that it should be called St. Joseph's Monastery. In the thirty-second and thirty-third Chapters, (which are *additions* to the Saint's Life,) she gives us a most interesting account of the foundation of St. Joseph's Monastery at Avila.* It would be too long to mention in detail all the trials and persecutions,—all the slanders and reproaches, and the immense labors St. Teresa had to endure in establishing this house. Every one seemed against her at first: the people of the town, her superiors, the provincial, the mayor, the magistrates, the nobility, her sister nuns,—all protested against the foundation, not in words merely, but by scoffs, jeers, laughter, ridicule, and calumnies. Our glorious Saint, however, could not be daunted; her courage was superior to all their persecutions; and so calm was her soul under every trial, that she inspires us with unbounded admiration for her heroic patience and endurance. She simply recommended to God his own work, and He was pleased one day to comfort and encourage her, by these words, spoken to her in a vision: "Dost thou not know that I am mighty? What dost thou fear? Be assured the monastery shall not be dissolved. I will accomplish all that I have promised thee." The new monastery of St. Joseph was at last established, on the feast of St. Bartholomew, in the year 1562, to the great joy and consolation of St. Teresa. The people gradually became attached to the nuns; and they who persecuted them the most were their kindest and greatest benefactors afterwards. They acknowledged "that it was the work of God." (See Chapter xxxvi.)

Many Protestants will, no doubt, *ridicule* and *disbelieve* the visions and raptures of our Saint, and call them all illusions, or the result of an excited, enthusiastie, or weak

* In the same town was the convent of the Incarnation, in which the Saint lived several years. Many relaxations, however, had crept in, especially that of admitting too frequent visits of secular persons at the grate. The original rule, drawn up by Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, was very austere. (See Yepes and Ribera.)

imagination. But it is one thing to assert, and another to *prove* a fact. I defy any one to prove that the visions, &c., of St. Teresa were illusions. The raptures and visions carry with them their own evidence; for, as Cardinal Bona observes, writing on this very subject, "St. Teresa's visions and revelations were approved by men endowed with human and divine wisdom; and this by signs and marks which it is worth one's while to recount here. . . . Now, that St. Teresa's was a good spirit, and her revelations true, may be proved by the following arguments:—1. She always feared diabolical illusions, and therefore never asked or desired visions. 2. She always besought God to conduct her soul by the usual way, and only wished that God's will might be done. 3. She obeyed her directors most punctually, and after her visions she advanced the more in charity and humility, &c. 4. She was more willing to treat with those who were less credulous and more suspicious. 5. She always made it a point of duty to mention everything to her confessors; whereas the devil usually tries to conceal from others what he reveals. 6. She submitted to be examined by persons who at that time were eminent in Spain for their learning and piety; such as St. Peter of Alcantara, St. F. Borgia, the Ven. John of Avila, Balthasar Alvarez, Bañez, &c. 7. Her mind possessed the highest tranquillity and delight, transcending all the consolations of the world. 8. She had a most inflamed zeal for the salvation of souls; most chaste thoughts, a great candor, and a fervent desire after perfection. 9. Her visions came after long and fervent prayers, or after receiving the Blessed Sacrament, and they enkindled in her soul a most ardent desire of suffering for God. 10. She chastised her flesh with fasting, disciplines, and hair shirts; she rejoiced in tribulations, detractions, and sickness. 11. She loved solitude, and avoided the conversation of men, and was entirely disengaged from all earthly things. 12. Learned men never observed anything in her visions and revelations which was contrary to the rules of faith or Christian perfection."*

* "De Discretione Spirituum" (cap. xx.) These effects correspond with those mentioned by Benedict XIV. ("De Canon. et Beatif. Sanctorum.")

Gerson lays down a sure method of distinguishing between true and false visions ; viz. if the person so favored is known to advance in *humility alone* : “ Si unum hoc humilitatis signum benè excuteretur et pateret, alias inquirere notas necesse non foret. Nam ex humilitate et superbiâ in rebus spiritûs facillimè quis discat, quænam veræ sint, et quænam falsitatem oleant : ” such are his words ; and these correspond with what our Saviour says, “ By their fruits ye shall know them. ” St. Teresa often speaks on the deceits of the imagination and the fancy ; and in the “ Book of the Foundations, ” she points out to her Nuns the great danger of giving way to melancholy ; indeed, she was very careful not to admit into the convent those who seemed subject to it. She lays down as a rule, “ that if the person will not observe what her confessor commands her, nor allow him to guide her, it is either some evil spirit or a terrible melancholy. ” (Foundations, chap. xiii.)

It is also very remarkable, that nothing was ever spoken to her in any of her raptures, which was not afterwards literally fulfilled. Thus the death of St. Peter of Alean-tara was revealed to her a year before it took place ; so that St. Teresa says, “ When these words came from God, I find the truth thereof in many things which had been told me two or three years before, and they have all proved true. ” (Life, chap. xxv.)

The admirable letter which Father Avila sent to the Saint, after having perused the account of her Life, also confirms what has been said respecting her visions and raptures. I will quote a few passages : “ The doctrine concerning prayer is, for the most part, good, and you may well acquiesce in it, and follow it ; and in the raptures, I find the signs which those have that are true. The method of God’s teaching a soul without the imagination, and without interior words, is safe. I find nothing to scruple at, and St. Augustine speaks well of it. . . . I think these things have benefited your soul, and especially have made you know your own misery and defects, and amend them ; they have continued a long time, and always with spiritual profit ; they excite you to

love God and despise yourself, and to do penance. I do not see why I should blame them,"* &c.

When we remember how spiritual a man Father Avila was, and how deeply versed in all the wonders of the supernatural life, his words must have immense weight. In addition to all these proofs, we know that the account of her Life was examined by the Spanish Inquisition, and *much commended*; and above all, her doctrine has been styled by the Church, "heavenly." What stronger proofs can be desired? Much more might be said on the subject.

St. Teresa passed five years in her convent of St. Joseph, with thirteen devout Nuns, who led the lives of angels on earth. In August, 1567, the Saint founded the convent of Medina del Campo; after which came the foundations of Malagon, Valladolid, Toledo, Salamanca, Segovia, Veas, Seville, &c. Burgos was the last, and the most trying and difficult. And here I cannot forbear inserting the following most edifying account of the death of St. Teresa, translated from the History of her Life, written by Ribera and Diego de Yepez, both of whom had been for some time her confessors.

"After the holy mother had finished the foundation of Burgos, she departed to Palentia, and from thence to Medina, with the intention of making the best of her way to Avila, where she was prioress, and there bestowing the veil on her niece, Teresa of Jesus. But the Most High had appointed otherwise, for at Medina she found Father Anthony of Jesus, at that time the Deputy-Provincial, who, at the request of the Duchess of Alva, had come to meet her there, on purpose to take her along with him to Alva. There she was carried in a litter, suffering great pains all the way, and so much sickness, that when she came to Peynaranda, the next town, she felt such excessive torment, together with such an incredible decay of strength, that she quite swooned away; nor was there anything to be found that could relieve her sufferings but a few figs. The venerable Anne of St.

* The whole of this letter may be found in the Preface of Mr. A. Woodhead's translation of the works of St. Teresa. The remarks of Woodhead on the Saint's visions, &c., are exceedingly valuable. See also the Bollandists (Oct. 15.)

Bartholomew,* her individual companion, was exceedingly troubled, that in so great a necessity she could afford the holy mother no better help. But she comforted her, saying, 'Do not afflict yourself, daughter; these figs are very good, and many poor people have not such.'

"The next day on entering another town, they met with nothing but boiled herbs and onions, to make amends for the meanness of their dinner the day before; yet, with these she stayed her appetite as well as she could, though such food was bad for her health.

"The same night, being the Vigil of St. Matthew, she was brought to Alva. She was then so spent and sick, that when she came into the house she was persuaded to go to bed, and take a little rest. The next morning, however, she got up, and went to the church to hear mass, where, with great fervor of soul and extraordinary devotion, she received the Blessed Sacrament. She continued, sometimes better and sometimes worse, till the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel; on which day, after hearing mass and communicating, (which was now her daily practice,) she took to her bed and never rose from it again.

"The three days before her decease she spent in earnest prayer and devout supplications to God; and in the morning she called for F. Anthony of Jesus to hear her confession. It is believed that our Lord had then revealed to her the hour of her death, for some of the nuns heard F. Anthony tell her, to entreat our Lord not to take her away so soon. To whom the holy mother replied, 'That she seemed to be no longer useful in the world.' After this, she began to give many excellent instructions to her daughters, saying: 'I beseech you, my dear daughters, to observe the constitutions and rules very exactly; and I likewise beg of you, not to

* This holy servant, when very young, was one of the first who took the habit in St. Teresa's convent of St. Joseph, at Avila, of which city she was a native. Her eminent spirit of humility and prayer endeared her, in a particular manner, to St. Teresa. After the saint had expired in her arms, she was sent into France, with Anne of Jesus, and was appointed, by Cardinal Berulle, prioress of a convent founded at Pontoise. She died at Antwerp, in 1626. (Note of Alban Butler.)

regard the bad example which such a sinner as I have given you; but, in whatever I have offended, I desire you will forgive me.' So overpowered were the sisters with grief, that not one could answer a word.

"At five, in the evening, she asked for the holy viaticum. As soon as the sacred pledge of our redemption was brought into her room, though just before she was so exhausted and oppressed with pain, that she could neither move in her bed, nor turn from one side to the other, except by the help of the sisters; yet now she raised herself up in the bed with such vigor and ease, as if nothing were the matter; her face shone with unusual beauty, and darted forth rays of light, looking much younger than she really was; then, with a venerable look of majesty, closing her hands, she began to utter out of the abundance of her blessed heart, certain sweet and amorous expressions; among the rest were these: 'O my Lord and my Spouse! the desired hour I have so long wished for is now come. Now the time is come when we shall see each other. It is now time, O Lord! for me to depart; happy and prosperous may the journey prove; Thy will be done. The hour is come at last, when I shall pass out of this exile, and my soul shall enjoy, in Thy company, that which she hath so much longed for.' She also gave thanks to our Lord for His goodness in having made her a child of the Church, and given her the grace to die in its bosom: she often repeated those words: 'At last, O Lord! I am a daughter of the Church.' With great humility and compunction of heart, she begged of our Lord the pardon of all her sins, hoping, as she often said, for eternal salvation by the merits of Jesus Christ, humbly entreating her daughters to beg this of our Lord for her. She often repeated these words: 'A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit. A contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Cast me not away from thy face, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me: create a clean heart in me, O God,' &c. 'A contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise,' was frequently in her mouth, till her speech failed her.

"At nine o'clock the same evening, she received, with great reverence and devotion, the Sacrament of Extreme Unction,

joining with the nuns in the penitential Psalms and the Litany. F. Anthony asked her a little after, if she wished her body, after her death, to be taken to Avila or to remain at Alva? She seemed displeased with the question, and only answered, 'Am I to have a will in anything? Will they deny me here a little earth for my body?' All that night she suffered excessive pains. The next day, at seven in the morning, she turned herself on one side, just in the posture and manner that the blessed Magdalen is commonly drawn by painters. Thus she remained for fourteen hours, holding a crucifix so firmly in her hands, that the nuns could not take it away till after she died. She continued in an ecstasy, with an inflamed countenance and great composure, like one wholly taken up with internal contemplation. When she was now drawing near her end, one of the nuns, viewing her more attentively, thought she observed in her certain signs of our Saviour talking to her, and showing her some wonderful things.

"Thus she remained till nine in the evening, when she surrendered her pure soul into the hands of her Creator. She died in the arms of Sister Anne of St. Bartholomew, on the 4th of October, 1582; but the next day, on account of the reformation of the calendar, was the fifteenth of that month, the day now appointed for her festival. The Saint was sixty-seven years old, forty-seven of which she had passed in religion; twenty-seven in the monastery of the Incarnation, and twenty in that of St. Joseph."

At the moment that the Saint expired, several of the nuns saw many wonderful signs of her happiness and glory; a globe of light raising itself in the air; a dove mounting towards heaven from the room where the Saint expired, &c. A nun, who had charge of the infirmary, while sitting at a window of the room where the Saint lay, heard a confused kind of noise, as of a multitude rejoicing; and soon after, she saw a great multitude of persons, all in white, glittering with a wonderful splendor; entering the room where the holy mother reposed, they surrounded her bed, as if they had come to accompany her to heaven. A most agreeable odor filled the whole house. The countenance of the Saint

looked most beautiful and heavenly, not a wrinkle was to be seen on it.* These, and many other things, are attested in the Bull of her canonization. The Saint's body was honorably buried at Alva. On the 4th day of July, 1583, nine months after her death, the coffin was opened, and the body was found to be as perfect and incorrupt as if it had but lately been buried. The scent from the body was wonderfully sweet. Before the body was enclosed in a new coffin, the Father Provincial took off the left hand, which he afterwards carried to Lisbon, for a monastery of discalced nuns lately founded there. In 1585, by a decree of the Provincial Chapter of the Order, held at Pastrana, the body was secretly removed to Avila. The body was then examined again, and found in the same state as before, incorrupt, and sending forth a very sweet odor. But in 1586, the Duke of Alva, being quite angry at the removal of the Saint's body, obtained leave of the Pope to have it translated back again to Alva, which was accordingly done, with great honor and reverence; and there it remains, incorrupt, at the present day. More particulars may be seen in Ribera, (lib. v.,) and also in the Bollandists, (Oct. 15.). I should have mentioned, that the heart of St. Teresa, (as it is credibly believed, and can be proved,) was miraculously *transfixed*. The Church alludes to this wonderful fact in the hymn appointed for her festival: it is also mentioned in the Acts of her canonization, and by Benedict XIV. The Carmelites in Spain say the office of the Transfixion at the present day.

Many relics of the Saint are to be found in several parts of Europe. Her right foot is at Rome; a middle finger at Paris; one of the shoulder-bones at Brussels; and in Milan and Venice are some of her teeth. In Naples, her scapular is preserved; and at Paris her mantle. The two fervent communities of Teresians in England, and some of the houses in Ireland, also possess some valuable relics of their glorious mother.

* (See Ribera's Life of St. Teresa, in the Bollandists, lib. iii.; also Yepes, lib. ii. cap. xxxviii. Villefore likewise gives the same account of St. Teresa's death, lib. v.)

The original manuscript of the Saint's Life, together with her "Way of Perfection, the Foundations, and the Manner of visiting Convents," are still carefully preserved in the royal library of the Escorial.

The different Spanish editions of the Saint's works which have appeared, and the translations which have been made, into various languages, sufficiently prove the high estimation the world has formed of the Saint's writings. To enumerate *all* the different editions is unnecessary. In Spanish, the following are the principal ones: Eboræ, 1583; Salamanca, 1588; Naples, 1594; Madrid, 1597, 1611, 1615, 1622, 1627, 1635, 1636, 1661, 1662, 1670, 1678, 1752, 1778, 1793, Brussels, 1610, 1612, 1674, 1675, 1684, 1740; Antwerp, 1630, 1649, 1661.

Francisco Bordini, a disciple of St. Philip Neri, translated St. Teresa's Life into Italian, in 1601.* I believe there is another Italian translation, but I have not seen it. An edition of the "Foundations" was published in Rome, 1622; and at Venice in 1636. Her Life has also been translated into German, Latin, and French. Arnauld d'Andilly's translation was first published in Paris, in 1670; and since then there have been several editions, one at Brussels, in 1839, and the last in 1840, published by the Abbé Migne, who deserves much praise for his noble exertions in the cause of religion and literature. D'Andilly's translation is, on the whole, not very faithful, for here and there several passages might have been translated more accurately. But the reader must be on his guard in reading his translation, for as D'Andilly was a Jansenist, he tries to misrepresent what St. Teresa says in several places. I am not acquainted with any other translation of her "Life" into French, though several of her other works, including her admirable Letters, have been translated at different times.

Several eminent persons have written "Histories" of her Life. Among these, the first that deserves to be mentioned is F. Ribera, so well known by his Commentaries on the

* There is also an Italian translation, entitled "*Opere Spirituali della Santa Madra Teresa di Giesù*," (in 2 vols., *Venice*, 1690). Another translation was published at *Turin*, in 6 vols., 12mo. 1830-40.

Holy Scripture. He was born in 1537. Having commenced his studies at Salamanca, he was afterwards made one of the Professors in the Archiepiscopal College of Toledo; but, after a few years, he resigned this office, and entered the Society of Jesus. He made his noviciate under P. Balthasar Alvarez. After leading a most virtuous and edifying life, he died at Salamanca, in 1591. So great was his humility, that his superiors were obliged to command him to publish his Commentaries on the Holy Scripture.* He published all his works in Latin, except his "Life of St. Teresa," which he wrote in Spanish, and which was published at Salamanca, in 1590. It has been translated into Latin, under the following title: "*Vita S. Matris Teresiæ de Jesu, auctore R. P. Francisco Ribera; ex Hispanico sermone in Latinum convertebat Mathias Martinez:*" *Coloniæ Agrippinæ*, 1620. This translation is a very good one. The Bollandists have republished it at the end of their magnificent volume (page 538). In 1645, Ribera's Life of St. Teresa was published in French, by Père de Bretigny, who was assisted by D. Duchèvre, with this title: "*La Vie de la Mère Térèse de Jésus, composée par le R. P. François Ribera, traduite d'Espagnol en François par J. D. B. P. et le P. G. C. C.*" The style is very antiquated. With regard to Ribera's Life, as he was St. Teresa's confessor whenever she came to Salamanca, he must have had abundant means and opportunities of learning many valuable particulars about the Saint's Life. These he relates with great fidelity and unction, though the thread of his narration is often interrupted by pious reflections, and by a want of order and method; still the "Life" is exceedingly valuable and interesting.

The next writer after Ribera, is Diego de Yopez, of the Order of the Hieronymites, and Bishop of Tarassona, in Aragon, and confessor to St. Teresa and King Philip II. of Spain. Having the advantage of the labors of Ribera, and possessing the happiness of being an intimate friend of St. Teresa, he was enabled to furnish us with more valuable

* These consist of Commentaries on the twelve minor Prophets; on St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews; on the Apocalypse, and the Gospel of St. John.

details than his predecessor. The style is somewhat diffuse, but the Life is written with more order and judgment than that of Ribera. Yopez dedicated his work to Pope Paul V. It was first published in Salamanca, in 1606, with this title : " Vida, Virtudes, y Milagros de la B. Virgen Teresa de Jesus." Several other editions have been published in Spanish. The Life has also been translated into Italian and French ; into the former, by Cesare Braccini (*Rome*, 1623 ; and *Milan*, 1628). Giuseppe de Castro published a new and more correct translation in 1733, at Rimini. In 1643, P. Cyprien de la Nativité published a French translation. The style is not at all pleasing. The Venerable Johannes à Jesu-Maria published a short but admirable epitome of the Saint's Life in Latin, with this title : " Compendium Vitæ B. V. Teresiæ á Jesu, Fundatricis Fratrum Discalceatorum et Monialium Beatissimæ Virginis Mariæ de Monte Carmelo" (*Romæ*, 1609).

Several Lives of the Saint have appeared in French. P. François de Sainte-Marie wrote a General History of the Carmelite Order, in Spanish, and this was translated into French by Gabriel de la Croix (*Paris*, 1655). But the two other histories of the Saint's Life are those by Villefore and the Abbé Boucher. The former appeared in 1712, and is entitled, " La Vie de Sainte Térèse, tirée des Auteurs originaux Espagnols et des Historiens contemporains ; avec des Lettres choisies pour servir d'éclaircissements à l'Histoire de sa Vie." The Abbé Migne has prefixed this Life to his edition of the works of St. Teresa. The Life is correctly written, as far as I can judge, though it would have added to the value of the work, had the writer quoted his *authorities*. There are a few mistakes in the chronology of the Saint's Foundations ; and many have also complained that the author is *too cold* when speaking of her heroic deeds. Boucher published his Life of the Saint in 1810, " Vie de Sainte Thérèse, avec des Notes historiques, critiques, et morales." I have not seen the work, and cannot therefore pronounce any opinion on its merits. The Saint's Letters have been translated into French by two different individuals ; one is M. François Pelicot (*Anvers*, 1707), the other is M.

Chappe de Ligni. This last translation, which is the most elegant and correct, appeared in 1753. But as it did not include *all* the Saint's letters; a second volume appeared in 1748, translated by the Rev. Mother Marie Marguerite de Morpeou, Superioress of the Carmelite Convent of St. Denis; she died in 1727. The translation is exceedingly well done. I should have mentioned, that the translation of M. Pelicot is enriched with the valuable notes of Palafox, the illustrious Bishop of Osma.

Two translations of the Saint's Life have been published in English. One by the illustrious convert, Sir Tobie Mathews,* whose edition appeared in 1623, as Dodd mentions, though I think he is mistaken, for the translation was published at Antwerp, and this bears the date of 1642. There may have been two editions. The title is "The Flaming Hart, or the Life of the Glorious St. Teresa." No name is attached.

The other English translation is by the pious and learned Abraham Woodhead.† This includes all her works, except her Letters. The translation is divided into two parts, which appeared in 1669, 1671, and 1675. To both parts is annexed a very learned Preface, vindicating the visions and raptures of the Saint from the attacks of Protestant writers. The merits of both the translations, as regards *correctness* and *fidelity*, are, I think, almost equal, though the preference on the whole is due to Woodhead's. There is also a remarkable similarity of expression between the two Translations, of which a few examples will be sufficient.

Woodhead's Translation.—"The having of vertuous parents, and such as live in the fear of God, together with those favors which I received from His Divine Majesty, had been able to have made me good, if I had not been so very wicked. My father was delighted in reading good books; and used to have them in Spanish, that so his children might also read them," &c. (Chap. i.)

Sir Tobie Mathews'.—The having of vertuous parents,

* See a short Life of the author in the Appendix, No. 1.

† See Appendix, No. 2.

and such as live in the fear of Almighty God, together with those favors which I have received from His Divine Majesty, had been able to have made me good, if I had not been so very wicked. My father was delighted in reading good bookes, and used to have them in Spanish, that so his children might also read them," &c. (Chap i.)

Let us take the commencement of the second Chapter from Woodhead:—"I believe that a certain thing, whereof I will now give account, began to do me a great deal of hurt. I consider sometimes how ill those parents do who procure not that their children should be ever seeing examples of vertue, in all kinds from them," &c.

Sir Tobie Mathews has almost the same words:—"I believe that a certain thing, whereof I will now give account, beganne to doe me a great deall of hurt. Sometimes I grow to consider how ill those parents doe, who procure not that their children should be ever seeing examples of vertue in all kindes," &c.

I might give many other passages, and compare them together, which would show a striking similarity of expression throughout, making allowance, of course, for a difference in orthography, considering that Sir Tobie's translation appeared several years before that of Mr. Woodhead, which is much more English and readable than Sir Tobie's. But in both the punctuation is exceedingly bad. However, as both the Translations are on the whole very faithful, I found it useful to have them by me, and compare and correct my translation (as I sometimes did) with theirs.

In 1757, the Venerable Bishop Challoner published an Epitome of Woodhead's translation, which is very useful for those who cannot obtain a copy of Woodhead or Sir Tobie's translation, both of which are now very scarce. Bishop Challoner, in his Preface, pays the following very deserved tribute of praise to Mr. Woodhead:—"The life of the holy Mother Teresa of Jesus, was published in our language anno 1671, by that truly learned and pious convert, Mr. Abraham Woodhead, some time fellow of University College in Oxford, a person justly esteemed, even by the adversaries of his religion, for one of the greatest men that this famous uni-

versity ever produced. As he was not only master of the Spanish, but withal scrupulously nice in not departing from the sense or the phrase of the original, his translation may be relied on as most faithful," &c.

With regard to the present translation, it is not my place to pronounce any opinion upon its merits. All I can say is, that though I have endeavored to adhere to the original to the best of my power, and to preserve the beautiful simplicity of the Saint's style, yet we all know how much inferior even the best translations must be to the original. But there is a difficulty about St. Teresa's Life which few other works present; and that is, the sublimity of the subjects on which she speaks: and this is especially the case in that part of the Life which treats of the prayer of Quiet and of Union. And if it be very difficult for the "unexperienced" to understand what the Saint says on that sublime subject, how much *more* difficult must it be to translate her thoughts and lofty words into another language. Here I am afraid I have failed; I must have made many mistakes—many mis-translations—many errors. In whatever way I may have done injustice to the Saint's Life, I humbly beg the kind indulgence of the reader. I shall be exceedingly grateful to any one who will point out the mistakes to me, and whatever else may require correction. Still, with all its faults and imperfections, I trust the reader will derive no little profit and delight from the perusal of a work, which, next to the "Confessions" of St. Augustine, is the most excellent and edifying Biography of a saint that we possess. The labor of translating it has indeed been great, interrupted, too, as it was very frequently, by my missionary duties, which required my chief attention. Still the labor has been abundantly repaid by the pleasure I have experienced in translating the words of so glorious a saint, and by the edification I have received in beholding her heroic virtues, and the bright example she still gives us all of humility, mortification, self-denial, obedience, purity, and the most ardent love of God, &c. I cannot conclude this imperfect Preface in any better way, than in the words of one who loved St. Teresa most tenderly and affectionately:—"Et tu, elemen-

tissima Virgo Teresia, fave, obseero, huic scriptori tuo, qui millenos calamos, ut heroica gesta tua celebret exercere cupit. Modicum est sane, nobilissima Virgo, quod extulimur : parce scripsi : at, quidquid moliri possum, exiguum est. . . . Per illud ergo immensi amoris incendium, quo in duleissimum Deum deflagrasti, obseero te, filio tuo manum porrigas, et ad optatissimam urbem Hierusalem æternâ libertate donandum recta perducas.”*

I cannot but express the great obligations I am under to the Superioress of Mount Carmel and the Teresian convent at Llanherne, for their extreme kindness in lending me many valuable works connected with the Saint's life; also to the Rev. Claudio Lopez, late of Yarmouth, for his kindness in explaining several difficult and obsolete Spanish words; to the Very Rev. Dr. Moore, of St. Mary's, Handsworth, for lending me the Antwerp edition† of the Saint's work (3 vols. Spanish, 1649); to W. Archer, Esq., for the loan of the last volume of the Bollandists, which contains everything that is known about St. Teresa; and lastly, I return many thanks both to Bishop Wareing and Bishop Ullathorne, for having given me their kind encouragement to proceed with the translation. To Bishop Ullathorne I am indebted for the loan of Mr. Woodhead's translation, now very scarce.

I have annexed, in the Appendix (No. 3), the Bull of the Saint's canonization, by Pope Gregory XV., in 1622. I have likewise added (No. 4) the Saint's celebrated Hymn, both in Spanish and in French, which she composed extempore in one of her raptures, together with an excellent English translation, by the Rev. Father Caswall; and also (Appendix No. 6) the letter which St. Teresa wrote to her confessor, when she sent him a copy of her Life.

JOHN DALTON.

BISHOP'S HOUSE, NORTHAMTON,

Feast of St. Teresa, 1851.

* “Compendium Vitæ B. V. Teresiæ à Jesu,” per Fr. Joan. à Jesu, (Romæ, 1609.)

† This, however, is not the best. I was unable to procure the last edition.



PREFACE OF ST. TERESA.

I WOULD have wished, that as my Superiors commanded me, and gave me full liberty to describe the method of prayer, and the favors which our Lord had bestowed upon me, they had also permitted me to mention, clearly and in detail, my great sins and wicked life. This would have given me great consolation ; but they would not allow me ; rather they restrained me in this particular ; and therefore I beg, for the love of our Lord, that whoever shall read this discourse of my Life, will notice how very wicked it has been ; so much so, that I have not found any saint, amongst all those who have been converted to God, from whose example I might draw consolation. For I consider, that after our Lord had called them to virtue they no more offended Him : whereas, I not only became worse, but rather, it seems to me, I even studied to resist the favors His divine Majesty had bestowed upon me : and though I was one who saw herself obliged to serve Him the more, yet I was convinced within myself I was unable to make any return, for the least part of what I owed Him.

May He be blessed forever, who waited for me so long. I beseech Him, with my whole heart, to give me grace, that I may, with all clearness and truth, make this relation which my Confessors have commanded me (and which I know even our Lord Himself has long desired ; but I could not dare to venture upon it) : I hope that now it may tend to the glory

and praise of His Majesty ; and also that my Confessors, having hereby a clearer knowledge of me, may henceforth assist my weakness; that so I may be able to repay some little portion of what I owe to our Lord, whom may all creatures praise forever. Amen.

TERESA DE JESU.

THE LIFE OF ST. TERESA.

CHAPTER I.

THE SAINT MENTIONS HOW OUR LORD BEGAN TO EXCITE HER SOUL, IN HER CHILDHOOD, TO VIRTUOUS ACTIONS, AND WHAT GREAT HELP HER PIOUS PARENTS WERE TO HER.

As I had virtuous parents, and such as feared God, this would have been sufficient, together with the other favors our Lord bestowed upon me, to have made me good, if I had not been so wicked. My father took great delight in reading good books, and he had them in Spanish, that his children might be able to read them. This circumstance, together with the care my mother took to make us say our prayers, and to show us the way of being devout to our Lady and some other saints, began to affect me when I was about six or seven years old, to the best of my remembrance. I was also assisted by observing, I should receive no favors from my parents, except I was virtuous, and they were very virtuous themselves. My father was exceedingly charitable towards the poor, and kind to the sick and infirm: and even to his servants he was so considerate, that he never could prevail on himself to keep any slaves, because his kindness was so great. Once there was a slave in his house who belonged to a brother of his, and he treated him as if one of his own sons, and said he could not bear to see such, unless they were free—such was his compassion. He was a great lover of truth; never did any one hear him swear, or detract; he was also exceedingly chaste. My mother likewise had many virtues, and she passed through life under great infirmities. Her purity was beyond all praise; for though she was very beautiful, no one ever heard she gave any occasion to the least suspicion, or that she made any account of her

beauty; and when she died, at three-and-thirty years of age, her conduct was such as would become a much older person. Her disposition was very sweet, and her understanding very solid. The afflictions she had to endure all her life were numerous; when she died she made a most Christian end.

There were three sisters and nine brothers; all (through the goodness of God) resembled our parents in being virtuous except myself, though my father loved me the most, and truly, before I began to offend God, he seemed to have had some reason; for I am grieved when I remember the good inclinations our Lord had given me, and the little I knew how to make a good use of them. My brothers, too, in no way prevented me from serving God.

One of them was about the same age as myself, and I loved him more than all the rest; though, at the same time, I loved them all very tenderly, and they loved me; myself and my brother joined together in reading the Lives of the Saints. When I saw the martyrdoms through which many had passed, for the love of God, I thought they had purchased very cheaply, the sight and enjoyment of God; and I myself felt a great desire to die in this manner; *not*, however, through the love which I thought I had for him, but rather that I might, by so short a way, enjoy the possession of those immense goods which I had read were to be found in heaven. I, therefore, and my brother considered together, what means there were within our reach, for attaining this object. We agreed to go into the country of the Moors, and to beg our way for the love of God, so that we might be put to death there; and it seems that our Lord gave us courage in so tender an age, if we could have found any means for accomplishing our object; but our having parents appeared to be the greatest obstacle. We were greatly amazed in reading, that both the torments and glory [of the next life]* were eternal. We often spoke on this subject, and we took delight in often repeating these words: "for-

* These words within brackets are not in the original, but have been inserted to make the sense more clear.

ever, forever, forever." By pronouncing them over and over again, our Lord was pleased to imprint the way of truth on me in that tender age ; and now, when I saw it was impossible to go where I might be put to death for God, my brother and myself tried to become hermits, and so, in a garden, which belonged to the house, we endeavored as well as we could to erect hermitages, and collected little stones for this purpose, which, however, soon fell down when we piled them up ; and thus we could find no means of executing our desires. But now it excites devotion in me when I consider how soon God gave me these good desires, which I afterwards lost through my own fault ; I gave alms as well as I could, though they were but little. I tried to be alone, in order to perform my devotions, which were many, especially the Rosary ; a devotion to which my mother was very much attached, and she endeavored to make us love it also. I took great delight, when playing with other children, in making monasteries, as if we had been nuns ; and it seemed as if I desired to be one, though not so earnestly as I did those things of which I have spoken.

I remember that when my mother died I was not quite twelve years old. When I began to understand what a loss I had sustained, I was greatly afflicted, and I threw myself before an image of our Lady, beseeching her, with many tears, to be a mother to me. And though I performed this action in simplicity, yet I think I gained benefit from it, for I have clearly experienced the assistance of this sovereign Virgin, whenever I recommended myself to her ; and, in a word, she has turned me altogether to her. It grieves me now to consider how insignificant those impediments were, which prevented me from remaining constant and firm in those good desires which I began [to have]. O my Lord ! since it seems Thou art determined to save me (and I beseech thy Majesty* that it may be so), and to show me such great favors as Thou hast already shown me ; wilt Thou not be pleased (not for my interest but for Thy glory), that this

* Your Majesty is a title frequently given by the Saint both to God and our Saviour. It is also applied in Spain to the Sacred Host.

dwelling in which Thou so continually abidest, may never more be defiled? I am grieved even to say so much as this, because I know the fault was entirely my own, since nothing was wanting on Thy part, that I might be wholly thine from that age. And if I should venture to complain of my parents, this would avail but little, since I never saw anything in them but what was good, and a solicitude for my welfare also. Passing on from that tender age, I began to understand the gifts of nature which our Lord had given me (which were great, according to what people said), and instead of giving Him thanks for them, I began to make use of them all in offending Him, as I shall now declare.

CHAPTER II.

SHE RELATES HOW SHE BEGAN TO BE FOND OF READING ROMANCES,
AND HOW NECESSARY IT IS FOR YOUTH TO KEEP GOOD COMPANY.

IT seems to me that a certain circumstance, which I will now relate, began to do me great harm. I sometimes consider what evil those parents commit, who do not always endeavor to show their children every kind of good example; for though (as I have already mentioned) my mother was very particular in this respect, yet, when I arrived at the use of reason, I did not follow her good example as much as I ought to have done, and, indeed, hardly at all; while, on the other hand, whatever was bad did me much harm. She was particularly fond of reading books of romance,* though she did not imbibe so much evil by this entertainment as I did, because it did not hinder her usual work, but it made us omit many duties, that so we might read these books. And perhaps my mother read them, that thus her thoughts might not dwell on the great troubles she endured, and her children might so occupy themselves as not to fall

* Books of knight-errantry were very common in Spain when St. Teresa lived. They were styled "Romances," because they were written in the vulgar language, then called *Romanciere*. (See Alban Butler's note on the subject, Oct. 15.)

into other more dangerous things. My father,* however, was so particular on this point, that great care was taken lest he should know anything on the subject. But I continued in the habit of reading these books, and this slight fault of mine, which I perceived in myself, began to cool my good desires, and was the cause of my failing in other things. I fancied, however, there was no harm, though I spent many hours, both of the day and night, in so vain an exercise, unknown to my father. But I was so addicted to this habit, that if I could not obtain some new book, it seemed to me I could not be happy.

I began also to wear fine clothes, and to desire to appear handsome. I took great care of my hands and of my hair, and was fond of perfumes, together with all those vanities which I was able to obtain, which were many; for I was very curious in this respect. I had, however, no bad intention, because I would not wish any one to offend God on my account.

This over-great nicety about finery and neatness continued some time; and hence, those things which for many years appeared to be no sin whatever, I now see how evil they were.

I had certain cousins-german who frequently came to my father's house; and these only were admitted, for my father was very prudent and circumspect, and would to God he had been so in regard to those likewise, for I now see the danger there is, in an age when virtues are to be planted in the soul, to converse with persons who, not knowing the vanity of the world, are the more inclined to excite others to throw themselves into it. They were almost of the same age as myself, or rather a little older; we were always together, they had a great affection for me, and in all things I gave them pleasure. I kept alive the conversation, and listened to the success of their marriage-proposals, and such other fooleries that are good for nothing; but what is still worse, my soul became exposed to that which was the cause of her evils. If I could

* The name of St. Teresa's father was Alfonso Sanchez Cepeda, and that of her mother Beatrice Ahumada. She was his second wife. St. Teresa was born in 1515.

advise parents, I would entreat them to take great care what kind of persons their children converse with at that age, for great mischief may thence arise, since our nature is more inclined to evil than to good. Thus it happened to me.

I had a sister much older than myself, whose purity and goodness I highly esteemed, though I profited nothing by them; but I received much harm from a relation of mine, who frequented the house. Her conversation was so light, that my mother did all in her power to prevent her coming to the house, (she appeared to foresee the evil that was to come on me;) but yet, the excuses of entering were so plausible, that my mother could not refuse her. With this person, (as I have said,) I delighted to entertain myself; with her I held conversations and intercourse, because she helped me to pass away the time in everything I wished, and she even enticed me into them, and gave me an account of her conversations and vanities. Up to the time when I began to be so familiar with her, (I was then about fourteen years old, and I think a little more,) that she made me acquainted with all her affairs; I do not think I had offended Almighty God by any mortal sin,* nor ever lost his fear, though I dreaded more the loss of my honor. This had power over me, so as to prevent me from losing it altogether; and I think that no consideration in the world could have made me change my resolution, nor could my love for any person have induced me to give it up. Would that I had possessed strength enough, not to go in opposition to the Divine honor, as even my natural disposition disposed me, not to lose that in which (as I thought,) the honor of the world consisted, though I considered not I had really lost it in many other ways. For vainly upholding it I used all my exertions, but I took no account of the means to preserve it; however, I used great diligence and circumspection not to lose it entirely.

My father and sister were much troubled about this friendship I had formed, and they reproved me for it very often; but as they were unable to remove the occasion of her coming

* Bishop Yepes expressly declares, in his *Life of our Saint*, that she never committed a mortal sin. (*Vida de Santa Teresa*, cap. iii.)

to the house, all their care was of no avail, for my quickness and sagacity in everything evil were very great. I sometimes am struck with the evil bad company produces; and if I had not experienced it myself, I could not have believed it; the greatest mischief arises, especially in youth, and, therefore, I wish that parents would learn experience from me, that so they may consider this point carefully. The truth is, that this conversing with the person above mentioned produced such a change in me, that there was now scarcely any sign left in me of my former good dispositions; and it seems that both she, and another also, who indulged in the same manner of amusements, impressed their character upon me. Hence it is that I now understand what a blessing good company is; and I consider it quite certain, that if, in that age, I could have conversed with virtuous persons, I should have preserved my virtue *entire*; and also, if then I had met with some one who could have taught me to fear God, my soul would have advanced and gained strength against falling. But afterwards, entirely losing this fear, the fear of losing my honor alone remained, and this tormented me.

But thinking that such and such things would not be known, I presumed to do many actions, both against my honor and against God. In the beginning these things did me harm—as far as I can judge; and they happened not through the fault of others, but my own fault, since afterwards my own malice was sufficient to commit evil, together with my servants, who were always ready for every kind of mischief. But if any of them had given me good advice, I should perhaps have profited by it; interest, however, blinded them, as my affections blinded me. And though I never was much inclined to evil (for I naturally abhorred dishonest actions,) yet I loved to pass my time in pleasant conversations; but being placed in the occasion of sin, the danger was near at hand, and that brought my father and brother into it. But God delivered me from this danger in such a manner, that it seems clear He wished, even against my will, to preserve me from utter destruction; though matters could not be managed so secretly but that my honor was stained thereby, and suspicions were raised in my father's mind.

After I had been living about three months in these vanities, I was taken to a certain monastery in this town,* where such young persons like myself were educated, though they were not so habitually wicked as I was. This removal was done with great discretion and caution, for only myself and a relation of mine knew of it. They waited for a favorable opportunity, that so the thing might not appear strange; for as my sister was then lately married, it did not seem proper for me to be at home alone without a mother. The love which my father bore me was so great, (and so also was my dissimulation,) that he could not believe so much ill of me, and therefore I did not fall into disgrace with him. For as the time was short, though he might have heard something about me, yet what he heard could not have been said with certainty, because, as I took so much care of my honor, all my diligence was directed towards keeping things secret, while I considered not how impossible it was to keep anything from *Him* who seeth everything. O my God! what evil is done in the world through not considering this truth,—through not remembering that nothing can be secret which is against Thee! I think it quite certain, that great sins would be avoided if we could understand that our duty does *not* consist in keeping ourselves from the sight of men, but in preserving ourselves from offending God.

During the first eight days I was in the monastery† I felt very unhappy, and the more so, because I suspected that my vanity was now discovered, and not so much because I was placed in the monastery. And I now began to be tired of my vanities, and to have a great fear when I offended God, and I endeavored to “confess” often. But eight days after, and I think even less, I enjoyed more quiet and comfort than ever I experienced in my father’s house. All the religious were glad to be in my company; for in this respect our Lord gave me the particular favor of always pleasing persons wherever I might be, and thus I was much beloved, and though

* In Avila, where there was a convent of Austin nuns. Our Saint was then about fourteen years old.

† “Un Monasterio” signifies a convent as well as monastery.

at that time I was quite opposed to my becoming a nun, yet I was glad to see in that house so many good religious, of great purity, and devotion, and recollection.

But notwithstanding all this, the devil ceased not to tempt me, and to seek persons out of the monastery to disturb me with their messages; but as there was no opportunity for them, they soon ceased; and my soul began again to accustom herself to the good impressions of my youth, and I saw how great is the favor God bestows on those whom He leads into good company. It seems as if his Majesty had gone on considering and re-considering, how He could bring me back again to Himself! Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who didst bear with me so long! Amen. One circumstance there was, which seems might have excused me, had I not committed so many faults, it was this: that the conversation I held was on the subject of a marriage, which seemed likely to end well. Having informed my confessor of the matter, and also many other persons, they told me I did not offend God. A religious slept where we secular ladies were, and it seems that by her means our Lord wished to enlighten me, as I shall now relate.

CHAPTER III.

SHE MENTIONS HOW GOOD COMPANY WAS THE MEANS OF RE-AWAKENING VIRTUOUS DESIRES WITHIN HER, AND HOW OUR LORD BEGAN TO GIVE HER LIGHT TO DISCOVER HER ERRORS.

As I now began to take delight in the good and holy conversation of this nun, I was pleased in hearing her speak so well on God, for she was a very pious and discreet person. As far as I remember, I was always pleased to hear her speak [on heavenly things.]* One day she began to tell me how she came to be a religious, which was by merely reading these words of the Gospel: "Many are called, but few are chosen." She spoke to me on the rewards our Lord will

* Not in the original.

give those who leave all things to follow Him. Her good company soon began to banish all the habits evil company had led me into, and to bring back to my mind the desire of eternal things, and also, in some degree, to divest me of that aversion I had to become a nun, which once was so very great. But now, if I saw any one shed tears at her prayers, or perceived that she possessed other virtues, I envied her extremely, though in this respect my heart was so very bad, that were I even to read the whole history of our Saviour's Passion, I could not shed a tear: this gave me a great deal of pain.

I remained a year and a half in this monastery to my great advantage; for I began to recite many vocal prayers, and prevailed on all the nuns to recommend me to God, that He might place me in such a state of life, wherein I could serve Him. But, still, I wished not to be a nun, and that this might not be the state which God would appoint for me. I was, however, afraid to marry. But at the end of the time I was in the monastery, I had a greater desire to be a religious, though not in that house, because the virtues there practiced were too high for me, and their mortifications seemed excessive in the extreme. Some of the younger nuns also encouraged me in these ideas; but if all had been of the same opinion, I should have gained much by it. I had likewise a great friend in another monastery, and this was partly a reason which induced me not to wish to be a nun, except in the house where this person lived, that is, if I were to be a nun at all. I had more regard for the pleasure of my sensuality and vanity, than for the welfare of my soul. These good thoughts, however, of being a nun, sometimes came into my mind, and went away immediately, so that I could not yet persuade myself to be one.

At this period, though I was not without solicitude for a remedy, yet our Lord was more desirous of disposing me for that state which was the best for my soul. I became so unwell, that I was obliged to return to my father's house. When I recovered, I was taken to my sister's house on a visit; she resided in the country, and great was the love I had for her; and if she could have had her will, I should

never have left her. Her husband also loved me much, at least he showed me every kindness and attention; and even for this I am indebted to our Lord, since in every place I am always treated kindly, notwithstanding I have been as ungrateful for this favor as I have for all others.

On the way to my sister, my father's brother* resided—a very discreet and virtuous man. He was a widower, and our Lord was disposing him for Himself, for in his declining year he left everything, became a religious, and ended his days in such a manner, that I believe he now enjoys the sight of God. But as I passed, he wished me to remain a few days with him. It was his custom to read good books in Spanish; and his usual discourse was on God and on the vanity of the world. Those books he made *me* also read; and though I had no great liking for them, yet I pretended I had; for I always took the greatest care to give pleasure to others, however dear it might cost me: hence, what in others would have been virtue, in me was a fault, because I often conducted myself without discretion. O my God! by what means and ways didst thy Majesty go on, disposing me for that state in which Thou wert pleased I should serve Thee! Thou didst even force me, against my will, to do violence to myself. Be Thou blessed forever. Amen. Though I remained but a short time in this place, yet such was the effect produced in my heart by the words of God, which I both heard and read, and also by the good company I had been in, that I came to understand those truths I had learnt when a child, viz., that all things were nothing; how great was the vanity of the world; how it would shortly end; and that I had just reason to fear, if I died (in my present state), I should be sent to hell. But though my will did not yet wholly incline me to be a nun, yet I clearly saw it was the better and more secure state; and so by little and little I resolved to force myself to embrace it.

In this battle I continued three months, urging myself to the religious state by these reasons; the labors and trouble

* His name was Pedro Sanchez de Cepeda.

of being a nun could not be greater than the pains of purgatory; and that as I had justly deserved hell, it should not be considered much, if, while I lived, I remained, as it were, in purgatory, that so afterwards I might go straight to heaven. Such was my desire; but in this inclination to embrace the religious life, it seems to me that I was more influenced by *servile fear* than by love.

The devil, in the meantime, represented to me that I should never be able to endure the difficulties of the religious state, because I was so delicately brought up. But against these suggestions I defended myself, by remembering the labors and sufferings of our Lord, and that it would not be much for me to endure some for the love of Him: I should also have recollected, that he would give me strength to endure them (for I forget whether I had this thought); but I am sure I had many temptations at this time. Fainting fits, accompanied with burning fevers, began also to seize me, for I always had very bad health. But I was supported by having become, at this period, fond of good books. I read the "Epistles"* of St. Jerome, which encouraged me to such a degree, as to make me resolve to acquaint my father with my intention, which was for me almost the same as taking the habit; for I was so nice about my word of honor, that it seems to me, when once I had given my word, I could never on any account withdraw it. But my father loved me so much, that I could not by any means gain his consent; neither was the entreaty of other persons, whom I induced to speak to him, of any avail. The most that I could obtain from him was, that after his death I might do as I pleased. I feared, however, my own weakness, lest I should fall back again; and so I thought it better not to accept the condition, and therefore I endeavored to gain my object in another way, as I shall now relate.

* "St. Jerome, when in Rome, had the care of many devout ladies, as Lea, Fabiola, Læta, Paula, Eustochium, &c., to whom many of his most edifying and valuable letters are addressed.

CHAPTER IV.

SHE RELATES HOW OUR LORD ASSISTED HER IN FORCING HERSELF TO TAKE THE RELIGIOUS HABIT, AND WITH HOW MANY INFIRMITIES HIS DIVINE MAJESTY BEGAN TO AFFLICT HER.

AT this time, while I was continuing in the resolution mentioned above, I persuaded one of my brothers to become a religious, having spoken to him on the vanity of the world, &c. We both agreed to go very early one morning to the monastery where that friend of mine was, to whom I bore such a particular affection. My resolution, however, was now so great, that I would willingly live wherever I could serve God the best, or my father wished me to go; for now I paid more attention to the welfare of my soul, and made no account of rest or ease. I remember (as far as I can call to mind, and without any concealment of the truth), that when I was leaving my father's house, I believe that at my death my feelings will not be greater than they were then; for it seems to me, that every bone in my body was then disjointed; and as I had no love of God to remove the love I had for my father and friends, all which I did then was with such great violence, that if our Lord had not helped me, my own considerations would never have been able to advance me forward: but he gave me such courage against myself, that I was enabled to execute my resolution.

In taking the habit, our Lord immediately gave me to understand how much He favors those who do violence to themselves in order to serve him; though no one noticed anything in me but a most ardent desire (to enter on a religious life). He then gave me such feelings of delight, in having attained this state, as have never left me up to this day. He also changed that dryness in which my soul had formerly been, into an extreme tenderness, while all the observances of religion delighted me. It is likewise true, that sometimes when I was sweeping the floor—during the very time in which I used once to be occupied with dress and vanities, but that now remembering how I was free from them—a new joy was given to me; so great, that I was amazed, and knew

not whence it came. When I remembered these things, nothing could present itself before me, however difficult, which I should not willingly have attempted; for I now have experience in numerous cases to assure me, that since God helped me in the beginning to resolve to do what I have done, His Majesty will also be pleased, even in this life, to repay us by such means as he only can understand who enjoys them (and our actions being done only for the love of God, He ordains for our greater good afterwards, that our souls should be in some trouble and terror at first; and the greater the trouble is, the greater and the sweeter will be the reward, if we persevere). This I have found true by experience (as I have said) in many important cases; and, therefore, if I were a person who could give an opinion, I would never advise any one, when a good inspiration often comes upon him, to throw it aside through fear of not being able to put it into execution; for if he go on solely and purely for God's sake, there need be no fear of success, since our Lord is powerful to do all things. May he be blessed forever. Amen.

The favors which Thou, O! my Sovereign Good, and repose of my soul, hast hitherto bestowed upon me through thy own goodness and greatness, ought to have been sufficient to have drawn me, by so many ways, to a secure state of life, and to a house where there are many servants of thine, from whom I could learn how to advance in thy service. But I know not how to pass on to anything else, when I remember the circumstance of my profession, and the strong resolution, and the great pleasure wherewith I made it, and the espousals I entered into with Thee: but of this I cannot speak without tears, even of blood; without my very heart breaking (and this would not be anything sufficient to testify my grief), when I think how I offended Thee afterwards. It now seems to me, that I had reason before, in not desiring so great a dignity, since I should have made such a bad use of it. But Thou, O my Lord! wast pleased, during almost all the twenty years in which I abused this favor, to be the person insulted, in order that I might become better. It seems now, O my God! that I made no promise, except not to observe what I had

promised Thee, though at that time my *intention* was not such. But I see that afterwards my actions were such, that I knew not what intention I had; and thus it is more clearly seen who thou art, O my Spouse! and who I am! It is quite true, that the sorrow for my great sins is often tempered by the pleasure which this consideration gives me, viz., that my sins will only make more manifest the multitude of thy mercies: For in whom, O Lord, can they shine more brightly than in *me*, who, by my evil actions, have so greatly obscured all the immense favors which Thou didst begin to show to me? Alas for me, O my Creator! if I wish to make any excuse, I can find none; nor can any one be blamed but myself; and if I should endeavor to return Thee any part of that love which Thou didst begin to show me, I could not centre it on any one except Thee, and thus everything would be remedied: but since I do not deserve this, nor ever had such a happiness, may Thy mercy now supply for all my deficiencies.

My change of life and food began, at this time, to injure my health, for though the pleasure I experienced was great, it was not sufficient. Fits of fainting again began to increase on me, accompanied with such a violent palpitation of the heart, as amazed every one who saw me: I also had many other infirmities, and thus I passed the first year with very bad health, though during this period I think I did not offend God much; but as my infirmity was so great, that it almost always nearly deprived me of my senses, and sometimes *entirely* took them away; so great likewise was the diligence used by my father, in seeking a remedy. Since, however, the doctors in the place could not find any relief for me, my father ordered me to be removed to a place which had a high reputation for having cured other persons of their infirmities, and so I was assured mine also would be cured.

The friend of whom I spoke before as living in the house accompanied me, for she was advanced in years; and in the monastery where she lived, no vows of enclosure were taken. I remained almost a year in this place, and during three months of it I suffered such excessive torments by the severe remedies applied, that I know not how I was able to endure

them; and though I did endure them, yet it was not my body which bore them, as I shall now relate.

This cure was to have commenced in the beginning of summer, and I went in the beginning of winter: all this time I remained in the house of that sister of whom I have spoken before, who lived in the country: I waited till April, being near the place, that so I might not be obliged to be going and coming to and fro. When I was leaving my uncle (whom I mentioned as having visited on the way), he gave me a book called "The Third Alphabet,"* which treated of the prayer of recollection. Now, though in the first year I had read some good books, and did not wish to read any others (for I already knew the harm they had done me); yet I knew not how to proceed in prayer, nor how to acquire recollection; and so I was very glad to have this book, and was determined to follow that way (of prayer) to the best of my power; and since our Lord was already pleased to bestow the gift of tears upon me, and as I delighted also in reading, I began to spend some time in solitude, and to "confess" very often, and to commence following that path; as I considered this book to be my guide, because I could meet with no other master, I mean no director who could understand me, though I endeavored to find one for the space of twenty years after this time. This misfortune did me much harm, and often made me turn back, yea, even to lose myself entirely; but a good director would have daily assisted me in flying those occasions, by which I offended God.

In these beginnings, His Majesty began to confer on me such great favors, that at the end of the time I remained there in this solitude, (which was about nine months,) though I was not free from offending God, having neglected what the book directed me to do, from an idea that such great watchfulness was almost impossible; yet I was careful not to commit any mortal sin, and would to God I had been always so; but of venial sins I made little account, and this was the fault which ruined me. But our Lord began to caress me so much in this way, (of prayer,) that He vouchsafed to give

* Written by F. Ossuna.

me the favor of enjoying the "Prayer of Quiet,"* and sometimes that of "Union," though I understood neither the one nor the other, nor how much they deserved to be prized; but I think it would have been a great happiness for me if I had understood their nature. True it is, the "Prayer of Union" continued so short a time, that I know not if I could have repeated the "Ave Maria" during it; yet the effects of the prayer which remained were so great, that though I was not then twenty years old, it seemed as if I could trample the whole world under my feet; and so I remember to have had great pity for all those who follow its maxims and ways, though even in lawful things.

I endeavored, to the best of my power, to represent our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our only good, as present within me; and this was my method of prayer; when I meditated on any action in His life, I represented it in my interior, though I spent the greater part of my time in reading good books, which was all the recreation I had; for God did not give me the talent of discoursing with my understanding, nor of helping myself by means of the imagination, which is so dull, that even to think and represent within myself, (as I endeavored to do,) the Humanity of our Lord, was more than I could ever perform; and although, if we persevere, we may more quickly arrive at "Contemplation," by being unable to exercise our understanding, yet the way is very laborious and painful, because if the occupation of the will be wanting, and our love should have no object present to occupy itself on, the soul is left, as it were, without any support or exercise; and solitude and dryness give her much trouble, and bring our thoughts into a most terrible combat.

For persons who have this inclination, greater purity of conscience is necessary than for those who are able to exercise themselves with their understanding; because he who is able to reflect on what this world is—on what he owes to God—how much He suffered for him—and how little he serves Him, will thence derive matter to defend himself from improper thoughts and dangerous occasions. But he who

* The Saint explains afterwards what is meant by the prayer of Quiet and Union.

cannot make use of this means is exposed to greater danger, and therefore he should spend much time in *reading*, since from himself he is unable to draw any advantage. This method of proceeding is so very painful, that if the director who teaches him should urge him to pray *without reading*, (which is of great help to a person who proceeds in this way, and is even necessary, though what he reads may be little, and is intended to supply the place of mental prayer, which he cannot practice;) I repeat, if without this help his director should make him remain a long time in prayer, it will be impossible for him to continue in it for any length of time : and besides, it will injure his health if he persist in it, for it is a very painful exercise.

It now seems our Lord so ordered things, that I could not find any one to instruct me ; for it appears impossible to have endured my great dryness and afflictions during eighteen years, without being able to discourse with my understanding, as I have already mentioned. During all this time I never dared to pray without a book, except immediately after communicating, so that my soul was as much afraid to be without a book, as to fight against a multitude of people. But by this remedy I went on with much comfort, for it was like a guard of soldiers, or a buckler, on which the blows of many thoughts were to be received ; for this “dryness” was not usual with me, though it always came when I had no book ; and my soul became immediately disturbed, and my thoughts began to wander, but by reading I soon re-collected them ; and thus, as it were by flattery, my soul advanced onward. Often, by merely opening a book, I found I need do no more ; sometimes I read a little, and other times, much, according to the favors our Lord was pleased to show me. It seems to me, that if in these beginnings whereof I speak, I could have had books and opportunities of being in solitude, no danger could have deprived me of so great a good. I think, likewise, that it would have proved so by the favor of God, if I could have had a director, or some person who would have advised me to fly the occasion, (of sin,) in these beginnings, and to make me forsake them immediately, if I had fallen into them. And should the devil then have attacked me openly, I think I should on no account have been induced

to offend God grievously. But the devil was so crafty, and I was so wicked, that all my resolutions availed me but little; though the time I spent in the service of God was of great help towards enabling me to endure my terrible afflictions, which I bore with as great patience as His Majesty gave me.

Often have I considered with amazement the great goodness of God, and my soul has been enraptured in considering His magnificence and mercy; may He be blessed by all men, for I have clearly seen, that even in this life He has not failed to recompense me for every good desire. And, however imperfect and wicked my works have been, yet my Lord continued to make them better and more perfect, thereby giving them worth and merit, while my sins and miseries He instantly hid, (from others.) Even the eyes of those who saw them, His Majesty allowed to be blinded, and their memory to fail. He gilds our faults, and causes that virtue to shine which the same Lord has placed in me, almost doing violence to me, that I may receive His favors.

But now I wish to return to what my Superiors commanded me to mention. If I were to relate minutely how our Lord proceeded with me in these beginnings, I should require another understanding different from what I have, to be able to appreciate what I owe Him in this respect, and to publish my own wickedness and ingratitude, for He has forgotten all of it. May He be blessed forever, who has borne so much from me. Amen.

CHAPTER V.

SHE CONTINUES TO RELATE THE PAINFUL INFIRMITIES SHE ENDURED,
AND THE PATIENCE OUR LORD GAVE HER, ETC.

I FORGOT to relate how, in the year of my noviciate, I suffered great uneasiness of mind about things which, in themselves, were of little consequence; but as I was often blamed without having committed any fault, I bore it with much pain and great imperfection, though I endured everything, through the earnest desire I had to be a nun. When they noticed that I sought after solitude, and sometimes shed tears for my sins, they fancied I was of a discontented disposition, and they told me so. But I was most anxious to observe all the rules of the religious life; I could not, however, endure anything which had the appearance of bringing me into contempt, for I delighted in being esteemed; I was curious about whatever I undertook, and everything appeared to me to be virtue, though this will not serve me as an excuse, because I knew well how to obtain all those things which could give me pleasure; and thus ignorance will not free me from blame. It was a defect that the monastery was not founded in great perfection; and as I was so wicked, I followed that which was imperfect, and omitted what was good.

At that time there was a Religious afflicted with a most grievous infirmity, which caused her great pain. There were ulcers in her body, which came from certain obstructions, so that she could not retain her food; and therefore she soon died of her disease. Though I noticed that all the other nuns feared to have the like infirmity; yet, for my part, I greatly envied her patience, and begged of God, that if He would give the like patience to me, He might send me whatever infirmity He pleased. It seemed as if I feared no disease whatever, for I was so bent on gaining eternal goods, that I resolved to purchase them, whatever they might cost me. At this I wonder, for even then I think I had no love for God; though afterwards I believe I gained it, when I began to exercise myself in prayer; and a light (from above)

showed me how contemptible everything is that has an end, and how inestimable those goods are which are eternal, and which can be obtained. His Majesty heard my prayer for such an affliction ; for before the expiration of two years, I became so afflicted, that though my disease was not of the same nature as the person's (above mentioned :) yet I think mine was equally painful and troublesome during the three years I endured it, as I shall now relate.

The time having now arrived which I had been waiting for, my father, my sister, and that Religious who accompanied me, and had so much regard for me, removed me with great care to the place destined for my cure. Here the devil began to disturb my soul, though God drew good from it. There was a certain ecclesiastic who resided in the place where I went for my cure. He was of a good family, had a solid judgment, and was somewhat learned. I began to "confess" to him, for I was always fond of learned men, though those confessors who were only half-learned, did my soul much harm, because they had not the learning I desired. I have found by experience, that it is better for directors, who are virtuous, and full of holy manners, to have no learning at all, rather than little ; because, those who have none will not trust themselves without asking the opinion of others who are learned, and neither could I trust them myself. But I was never deceived by any truly learned man ; and even those others had no desire of deceiving me ; but they erred only because they knew no better. I thought they were capable (of guiding me,) and that I was not bound to do anything but to believe them ; as what they told me was in accordance with the general opinion, and gave me more liberty : if they had been more strict with me, I was so wicked, that I should have chosen other confessors. That which was a venial sin, they told me was none at all ; and that which was a most grievous mortal sin, I was assured was only a *venial* sin. This kind of doctrine did me so much harm, that I consider it necessary to mention this circumstance here, in order to put others on their guard against so great an evil. I see clearly, that in the presence of God, this was no excuse for me ; for as the things were in their own nature bad, this ought to have been sufficient to have

preserved me from them. But I think that Almighty God, on account of my sins, allowed my confessors to deceive me, and to be deceived themselves. And I also deceived many others, by telling them the very same things which had been told me.

I continued more than seventeen years, I think, in this blindness, till a Dominican friar—a man of great learning—undecided me in many things; and the fathers of the “Society of Jesus”^{*} made me comprehend, how terrible my state was on account of such bad beginnings, as I will now relate.

When I began to confess to this person (of whom I spoke above), he became extremely attached to me, because then I had but little to confess, in comparison with what I afterwards had; indeed, I had not much from the time I became a nun. The affection of this man was not bad, though by being excessive it became evil. He knew well that I was determined not to do anything grievously offensive to God, on any account whatever; and he also assured me as much on his part; and thus our conversation became frequent. But in the interviews we then held, I was so absorbed by the thoughts of God, that my greatest delight was to speak on subjects relating to Him; and as I was then very young, he seeing this inclination made him somewhat ashamed. But on account of the great affection he bore me, he began to discover his misery to me; and this was not small, for he had then been almost seven years in a very dangerous state, by reason of his affection for, and conversation with a certain lady of the town; and yet he continued to say mass. The thing was so public, that he had lost his honor and character, and yet no one ventured to speak to him on the subject. I was quite grieved to see in what a state he was, because I loved him much. But I was so possessed with folly and blindness, that it seemed a virtue in me to be grateful, and to keep on good terms with one who loved me. Cursed be such a law which proceeds so far as to be against

^{*} This is the first time our Saint mentions the Society of Jesus. We shall afterwards see how highly she prized that illustrious order. St. Francis Borgia, when he came to Avila, had an interview with her, and assured her that her method of prayer came from God.

the law of God. It is a madness which now prevails in the world ; and it makes me almost lose my senses, to see how every good which men do to us we owe to God, and yet how we esteem it a *virtue* not to break off this friendship, even though it should lead us to do evil against Him. Oh, blindness of the world ! But be Thou pleased, O Lord, that I may be the most ungrateful creature in the whole world, provided that I may not be, in the least point, ungrateful to Thee ! But by my sins I have done quite the contrary.

I endeavored to gain more information concerning this person from the domestics of his house ; I then became more acquainted with his misery, but saw that the poor man was not deserving of so much blame, because that unfortunate woman had used certain charms over him, by means of a little copper idol, which she begged of him to wear around his neck for her sake ; and no one had been able to dissuade him from wearing it. For my part, I do not believe in the power of such charms as this, that it could affect one in any definite manner : but I will relate what I saw, in order that others may be on their guard against those women who may wish to act in the same manner, and to the end they may believe, that when such characters lose all fear of God (and they are more obliged to be chaste than men), no trust at all is to be reposed in them ; for provided that they have their own will and affection gratified—which the devil puts in them—they care for nothing. But though I have been very wicked, yet I never fell into any crime of this sort, nor did I ever try to commit any evil ; and even if I had been able, did I ever force any one to love me, because God preserved me from such an evil ; but if He had left me to myself, I should certainly have committed as many evil things in this respect, as I did in other matters, for there was no trusting me in any way. As soon as I heard the particulars of the case, I began to show him more affection : my intention indeed was good, but my action was bad, for I ought not to have committed the least evil to gain the greatest good. I discoursed very frequently with him concerning God, and this perhaps did him some good, though I think that the great love he had for me influenced him the most ; for in order to confer on me a favor, and to give me

pleasure, he gave me his little idol, which I immediately contrived to cast into the river. Being deprived of this, he began to recover like one roused from a deep sleep, and to remember all that he had done during those years: he was amazed at himself, and so, bemoaning his misery, he came by degrees to abhor it. Our Blessed Lady, without doubt, assisted him much, for he was very devoted to her Conception, and that feast he always celebrated with great joy. At length he broke off the habit of seeing this woman any more, and could never satisfy himself with giving thanks to Almighty God for the light He had given him. But he died just upon that day twelvemonth after I had first seen him. He had already begun to serve God very fervently; and though I never could perceive that the great affection he bore me was bad, yet it should have been more pure. But there was no want of occasions in which, if I had not kept myself in the presence of God, I might have committed very grievous offences against Him. Still, as I have already mentioned, whatever I thought might be a mortal sin, I would not then have committed it; and this person, seeing such a disposition in me, was inclined perhaps to love me the more. All men, I believe, are more fond of those females who they see are inclined to virtue; and even in those things in which they desire to succeed, they gain more influence over the men, as I shall afterwards declare. I consider it *certain*, however, that his soul is saved, for he died very piously; and having quitted so well the occasion, it seems our Lord was pleased he should be saved by this means.

In that place I remained three months, under the most grievous afflictions, for the cure was more severe than my constitution could endure, so that at the end of two months the medicines were so powerful that my life was almost endangered; in addition to this, the palpitation of my heart, which I went to have cured, became so much more violent, that sometimes I thought my heart was torn with sharp teeth, and my friends were afraid I should lose my senses. Together with a great want of strength (for I could take no food whatever except it were liquid), with a violent loathing, a continual burning fever, and being also so reduced on account of the purging medicine, which was continued for

almost a month, I was moreover so burnt up, that my nerves began to contract with a pain so insupportable, as to prevent me taking any rest day or night ; and during this period I was oppressed with a most profound sadness of mind.

Having recovered so far, my father took me home again, where the physicians came to see me ; all despaired of my recovery ; for, besides my usual sickness, they said I was settled in a hectic fever. This, however, troubled me very little ; but my pains afflicted me the most, for I was full of them, from the crown of my head to my feet ; the pains arising from the nerves are intolerable—according to the testimony of doctors—especially when the nerves shrink up as mine did ; and certainly, if I had not lost the merit of patience through my own fault, my torment was great enough to have earned some. I did not remain more than three months in this torture, for it seemed impossible to endure so many afflictions together. I am now amazed at myself, and I consider as a great favor of our Lord, the patience which His Majesty gave me, for it evidently came from Him. I gained much benefit from reading the History of Job, in the “Morals” of St. Gregory ; so that our Lord seems to have prepared me by this means, and also by my having commenced the practice of Prayer, in order that I might be able to bear those trials with submission to His will. All my conversation was with Him : and often did I remember and repeat these words of Job : “If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil ?” (Chap. xi. 10.)

At length came the Feast of our Lady, in August ; for till then, from the April before, my pains had continued, though they were greater during the last three months. I then made haste to go to confession, for I was always very fond of confessing often. My friends thought that I was influenced through fear of death ; and so that I might not be troubled thereat, my father would not let me confess. Oh, the inordinate love of flesh and blood ! for though I had so Catholic a father, and one too, who was so prudent, yet he might have done me a great deal of harm, for his conduct could not have been the effect of ignorance. That night I fell into a trance, which continued for about four

days, during which I had not the use of any of my senses. In this state I received the sacrament of Extreme Unction; and every hour, and even every moment, was expected to be my last: my friends continued reciting the Creed, as if I understood them. At one time they considered me to be dead, so certainly, that afterwards I found drops of the wax-candles on my eyes. The affliction of my father was great, for not having allowed me to go to confession: many tears were shed, and many prayers offered to God for me. Blessed be our Lord, who was pleased to hear them; for though my grave remained open in the monastery for a day and a half, it being expected my body would be buried there; and though the funeral service was performed by the friars of our order in another town, yet our Lord was pleased I should return to myself again: I immediately expressed a desire to confess. Having done so, I received the blessed Sacrament with many tears, though in my opinion they were not shed with a deep feeling of sorrow for having offended God; for this might have helped to save my soul, if the error into which I was led by those who told me that some things were not mortal sins, which afterwards I felt certain were so, had not proved injurious to me. The torments with which I was afflicted were intolerable, and my understanding was rather dull, though, as I thought, my confession was entire, having declared everything by which I feared I had offended God. This favor His Majesty vouchsafed to grant me among others, that after I had begun to communicate, I never omitted confessing anything which I thought to be a sin, even though it were venial. But yet I am almost certain that had I died then, my salvation would have been in great danger, because on the one hand my confessors were so little instructed, and on the other I myself was so wicked. It is most certainly true, that when I think of this event in my life, and how it seems as if our Lord raised me from death to life, I am filled with such great amazement, that almost my whole body trembles. It seems proper then, O my soul, that thou shouldst consider the danger from which our Lord delivered thee; and that as thou hast not avoided offending Him through love, thou mayest cease to do so through fear, for He might have taken away thy life a thousand times, when

thou wert in a more dangerous state. I believe I should not be exaggerating were I to add a thousand times more though perhaps he may chide me, who commanded me to use moderation in the recital of my sins; and yet I have represented them too favorably. But for the love of God, I beseech my Superior not to make me diminish my faults, because thereby the goodness of God will be seen, and what He suffered for a soul. May He be blessed forever, and may He annihilate me, rather than I should ever cease to love Him more and more.

CHAPTER VI.

SHE MENTIONS HOW MUCH SHE OWED OUR LORD FOR GIVING HER CONFORMITY TO HIS WILL IN SUCH GREAT AFFLICTIONS; AND HOW SHE ALSO CHOSE THE GLORIOUS ST. JOSEPH FOR HER PATRON, ETC.

I REMAINED during these four days of the trance in such a state, that our Lord only can know the insufferable torments I felt. I had bitten my tongue in several places; my throat, through my being unable to take anything, and by reason of the great weakness which oppressed me, could not swallow even a drop of water without choking me. It seemed as if I were entirely disjointed, and my head appeared extremely disordered; I was contracted like packthread, for in this consisted the torment I endured those days—without being able to stir either hand or foot, arm or head, unless I were moved; so that I was like a person dead: I thought, however, I could move a finger of my right hand. No one could touch me in any way, for my whole body was so afflicted, that I could not endure to have it touched. I was removed about in a sheet, one person being at one end, and another at the other end; in this state I continued till Easter. The only relief I had was this, that if I were not touched, my pains frequently ceased: and then, as I enjoyed a little ease, I considered myself to be well; but I was afraid lest my patience should begin to fail, and therefore I was much pleased to see myself free from those sharp and continual

pains, though I still had a great leathing for food—in addition to extremely severe colds, produced by a double quartan, which was insupportable.

About this time I made such haste to return to the monastery, that I managed to have myself carried away just as I was. Though the sisters thought I was dead, they received me with a soul still in the body; but the body was worse than dead, by reason of the pains they saw it had endured. I cannot describe my extreme weakness, for nothing was left but my bones; and for more than eight months I remained in this state; I was quite a cripple for almost three years, though still I was getting better. When I began to walk on all-fours, I gave thanks to God. But all these afflictions I endured with great resignation, and even with extreme delight—except in the beginning—for I esteemed them all as nothing, in comparison with those pains and torments I endured at first. I was very resigned to God's will then, even though He should have left me in that state forever. I think that the reason why I was so anxious to recover was, that I might apply myself all alone to prayer in the way I had been instructed; and in the Infirmary there was no means of doing this. I confessed my sins very often. I frequently spoke of God in such a way as to edify every one; and, indeed, they were amazed to see the patience our Lord had given me: for had it not come from the hand of His Majesty, it seems impossible I could have suffered so many afflictions with such great pleasure.

Great indeed was the favor our Lord bestowed on me by giving me a method of prayer; for thereby I came to understand what it was to love Him; and from the little time I spent in it, I observed new virtues to spring up within me, though they were not strong, nor were they able to keep me in the way of justice. I did not speak ill of any one in the slightest degree, for my ordinary custom was to avoid all kind of detraction, since I remembered that I should never wish nor say anything of any one, which I did not wish should be said of me. This I paid particular attention to on all occasions, though yet not so perfectly when occasions sometimes offered themselves of my breaking my rule: still it was my general practice. Those who were in my company, and who

spoke to me, I so earnestly persuaded to adopt the custom, that it became natural to them. Hence it was understood, wherever I was, that all absent persons were secure; and it was also the case with those who were my friends and relations, or others whom I had instructed. And though in many things I shall have to give a strict account to God, yet I hope His Majesty may be pleased to pardon the bad example I gave them—for I have been the cause of much evil, though it was not done with such evil intentions as those actions were which I committed afterwards. I was still desirous of solitude, and loved to discourse and to speak on God; and if I could find any one to enter with me into the conversation, that gave me more pleasure and recreation than all the polite conversation—or rather grossness—of the world. I also loved to communicate and to confess much more frequently, and to desire doing so. I became very fond of reading good books, and began to have such a deep sorrow for having offended God, that many times I remember I dared not pray, because I feared the excessive pain which I was sure to feel for having offended Him, as a severe punishment for my sins; and this pain became afterwards so extreme, that I know not what to compare it to. This never happened to me, either more or less, through any fear I had, but only when I remembered those caresses our Lord granted to me in prayer, and what I owed Him for them; and when I saw how ill I repaid Him, I could not endure the thought. I was also extremely troubled on account of the many tears I shed for my faults, when I perceived there was no amendment in me; and that neither my resolutions, nor the pains I took not to fall any more when the occasions of sin were offered, were of any avail. My tears seemed to deceive me, and my fault appeared so much the greater, because I was convinced how great a favor our Lord bestowed on me in granting me those tears, and that great sorrow which I felt. I endeavored to confess often; and it seemed to me that I did all I could in order to be restored to a state of grace. All the evil consisted in not pulling up the “occasions” by the root; my confessors, too, helped me but little: but had they told me of the danger in which I was, and of the obligation I lay under to break off those conversations, I am

convinced the evil would have been remedied ; for, on no account could I have endured to remain, even one day, in mortal sin, had I known I was in that state. All these signs of the fear of God came to me through prayer ; and the greatest of them was, that I went on wrapt in love, and the punishment of sin I did not think of. All the time that I was sick, I kept a great guard over my conscience, as far as concerned mortal sins. But O my God ! how much did I desire my health, in order to serve Thee better ! And yet this was the cause of all my misery. And now, when I saw myself a cripple, and so young too, and how the physicians of this world had treated me, I resolved to apply to *heavenly* physicians for my cure, which I still desired with much earnestness, though I bore my pains with joy. Sometimes I used to think, that if by recovering my health, I should be condemned to hell, it would be better for me to remain as I was ; however, I thought I should serve God much better had I my health. Here is our error, in not entirely resigning ourselves to the will of our Lord, who knows what is the best for us.

In the mean time, I began to get some masses to be said for me, and to make use of devotions that were very much approved of ; for I was never fond of certain other devotions, which some persons—especially women—went through with such ceremonies and forms as I could not endure ; I understood that they bordered on superstition, though they may have excited piety in some people. I took for my advocate and master the glorious St. Joseph, and I recommended myself much to him ; for I saw clearly, that where my honor and the loss of my soul were concerned, my father and master delivered me from that danger, as well as from others still greater : and this with more advantage than I could desire myself. Up to this time, I cannot remember having asked him for anything which he did not obtain. I am quite amazed when I consider the great favors our Lord has shown me, through the intercession of this blessed saint, and the many dangers, both of soul and body, from which he has delivered me. It seems, that to other saints, our Lord has given power to succor us in *only one* kind of necessity ; but this glorious saint, I know by my experience, assists us in all kinds of

necessities : hence our Lord, it appears, wishes us to understand, that as He was obedient to him when on earth (for he was called His father ; and being, as it were, His tutor, he could command Him ;) so now in heaven He grants him whatever he asks. This truth many others also have experienced, who have recommended themselves to him by my desire : many are now devoted to him, and I myself have fresh experience of his power.

I endeavored to celebrate his festival with all the solemnity I was able, but with more vanity than true devotion, as I desired it should be kept very properly and exactly, though yet my intention was good. But this was my fault : that whenever our Lord gave me grace to perform any good action, it was full of many faults and imperfections ; whereas, in the pursuit of curiosity, and vanity, and anything evil, I used great dexterity and diligence ; may our Lord pardon me ! Would that I could persuade all men to be devout to this glorious saint, by reason of the great experience I have had of the blessings he obtains from God. I have never known any one who was truly devoted to him, who performed particular devotions in his honor, that did not advance more in virtue, for he assists in a special manner those souls who recommend themselves to him. During many years I was accustomed to ask some favor of him, and I remember it was always granted ; and if sometimes my petition had something wrong about it, he rectified it for my greater good.

Were I a person who had authority to write, I would gladly enlarge here, and relate, in detail, the favors which this glorious saint obtained both for me and others ; but in order that I may do no more than what I am commanded, I must be shorter in many things than I could wish, and more diffuse in other points than is necessary ; in a word, I am like one who has but little discretion in doing anything which is good. I only request, for the love of God, that whoever will not believe me, will prove the truth of what I say ; for he will see, by experience, how great a blessing it is to recommend one's self to this glorious patriarch, and to be devout to him. Those persons especially who are given to prayer should ever be devoted to him, for I know not how he can think of the Queen of Angels—at the time when she suffered

so much on account of the child Jesus—and not give thanks to St. Joseph for the assistance he gave them. Whoever wants a master to instruct him *how* to pray, let him take this glorious saint for his guide, and he will not lose his way. God grant I may not have committed any error, in speaking as I have of such a saint! For though I thus profess to be devoted to him, yet I have always failed in imitating his virtues; but he acted like himself, by enabling me to rise, and walk, and to be no more a cripple; and so I also acted like myself, by making so bad a use of this favor.

Who could ever have supposed, that I should so soon have fallen back again, after His Majesty had begun to bestow some virtues on me; after having received so many favors from God, which, of themselves, excited me to serve Him; after I had seen myself as if it were dead, and in such danger of being condemned to hell; and after he had raised both my soul and body in such a manner, that all who saw me were amazed to behold me alive? What a misery is it, O my Lord! that we should live in such a dangerous life! While I am now writing these lines, it seems I may say, by Thy favor and mercy, what St. Paul said: “I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me,”—though not with the same perfection as he did; and according to the experience which I have now had for some years, Thou still keepest Thy hand over me, and I find myself filled with desires and resolutions (and in many things I have experienced this for a long time), not to do anything against Thy will, however small it may be, though I know I must commit many offences against Your Majesty without my knowing it. And it also seems, that nothing could be proposed to me which I would not resolutely perform for love of Thee; and in some things Thou hast assisted me, so that I might succeed in them. I care not for the world, nor for the things of the world; and I find that nothing whatever gives me any pleasure which does not come from you, and everything else seems a heavy cross.

I may, however, easily deceive myself in this point; and so I think I do, for I do not possess all that I have spoken of; but Thou knowest well, O my Lord! that I do not lie—as far as I know. I fear, with much reason, lest,

perhaps, Thou mayest leave me again, for I know now how far my strength goes, and what little virtue I possess, in case Thou art not near, to bless me and to help me, that so I may never desert Thee: and may thy Majesty grant, that I be not already forsaken by Thee, while I am thus saying so much about myself! I know not how we can desire to live, since all things are so uncertain here. It appeared to me, O Lord! impossible that I should entirely desert Thee; but since I have forsaken Thee so often, I cannot help fearing the like again, because when Thou retirest even a little from me, everything falls to the ground. Blessed be Thou forever; for although I forsook Thee, yet Thou didst not entirely forsake me, but didst give me Thy hand, that so I might rise up again; and oft'n, O Lord! I would not take hold of it, nor would I understand how frequently Thou didst call me again, as I will now relate.

CHAPTER VII.

SHE SHOWS BY WHAT DEGREES SHE WENT ON LOSING THE FAVORS WHICH OUR LORD HAD SHOWN HER, AND HOW WICKED HER LIFE BEGAN TO BE.

I BEGAN from one pastime to another, from vanity to vanity, and from one occasion to another, to cast myself very deeply into very great occasions; and my soul became so disordered with many vanities, that I already grew ashamed to approach to God with that familiarity, such as frequent prayer requires; and what helped me on to this was, that as my sins increased, the joy and delight which I had found in the exercise of virtue began to fail me. I now perceived very clearly, O my Lord! that these blessings were wanting to me, because I had first been wanting to Thee. This was the most terrible deceit which the devil could bring upon me, when I began to fear to practice mental prayer; because I saw myself in so bad a way, that I thought it would be better for me to proceed as the multitude did—since I was one of the worst of sinners, and to pray only as much as I was obliged, and that but vocally;

since a person who deserved to be with devils, should not make use of mental prayer, nor hold so close a communication with God: and that I was only deceiving the world, because I had an outward appearance of virtue. But for this reason, the house wherein I lived did not deserve any blame, because by my cunning I managed that people should have a good opinion of me, though I did not act in this way purposely—to counterfeit piety; for as regards hypocrisy and vain-glory, I thank God that I remember not to have offended Him therein—as far as I can perceive; for, on the very first motion to commit that kind of sin, I felt so much trouble that the devil went away with loss, and I gained thereby; and thus he tempted me but very little in this respect. If, however, God had allowed him to tempt me as strongly in this as he did in other things, I should have fallen into this sin also: but hitherto His Majesty has been pleased to preserve me, for which may He be forever blessed! But I was rather much troubled, that they should have such a good opinion of me, considering what I knew of myself privately. The reason why they believed me not to be so wicked was, that they saw me retire—being so young—many times and on several occasions to solitude and to prayer. They noticed that I read much and prayed much, and spoke of God; that I was fond of making pictures of our Saviour, and putting them up in many places; of making oratories, and of placing there whatever tended to excite devotion; that I spoke ill of no one; and other things of the like nature they observed, which bore an appearance of virtue; and I knew well (so vain was I) how to gain esteem for myself in those things, which the world is accustomed to prize.

By these observations of theirs, they allowed me as much, and even more liberty, than to the older religious women of the house: and they had great confidence in me, for as to my taking any liberties, or doing anything without leave, or even speaking with any one by night in holes or corners, was what I could never think of; even so far as to talk of any such thing in a monastery I never did, because our Lord held me by His hand. It seemed to me (for I reflected much and attentively on many things), that to expose the honor of so many Religious to chance, they being so good

and I so wicked, would have been a very unworthy action in me. But why do I speak of my having avoided the commission of evil, as if other things which I did had been *well* done? The truth is, that the evil which I did was not done with so much reflection as this would have required, though still it was too much.

On this account, it seems to me, that not living in a monastery which was enclosed did me much harm, though those who were good might continue in it without any disadvantage, because they were bound to no more, not having made a vow of enclosure: but as for me, who am so wicked, I should certainly have been carried to hell, had not our Lord drawn me out of this danger by many especial favors and remedies; and so I think that a monastery of women having such liberty, is very dangerous for them: in my eyes it seems to be more a road leading to hell those who desire to be wicked, than a remedy for their weakness. What I say does not refer to my monastery, for therein are so many who truly and with great perfection serve our Lord, that His Majesty (being so good) cannot fail to confer favors upon them; and this monastery is not one of those which are most relaxed, for every kind of good discipline is observed in it: but I speak of other houses which I have seen and known. I say then that these excite my compassion, for the Religious have need of *particular* calls from our Lord—not once, but often—in order to be saved, considering how much the honors and amusements of the world are authorized there, and how little they understand the obligations which bind them. God grant that they may not consider as virtue, that which is sinful, as I myself often did; and there is so much difficulty in making this understood, that it is necessary our blessed Lord himself should, in reality, put His hand to the work.

If parents would take my advice (since they will not place their daughters where they may walk in the way of salvation, but rather where they will encounter more danger than if they were in the world), I would advise them to consider their own honor, and rather to marry them very meanly, than to place them in such monasteries—unless they be virtuously inclined: and God grant that even this may profit

them. If the parents do not like what I recommend, they might keep their daughters at home; for if they wish to be wicked, they can keep it secret only for a short time; but in the monastery, their wickedness may remain hidden for a long time, though in the end our Lord is accustomed to discover it. But they hurt not only themselves, but all the others also; and sometimes these poor creatures are not to be blamed, because they only do that which they find practised. It is a pity to see how many, who desire to separate themselves from the world, and to avoid its dangers, thinking that they go to the monastery to serve God, do, nevertheless, find themselves cast into ten worlds, where they know not what to do, nor how to help themselves. Youth, and sensuality, and the devil incline them to follow some things, which belong to the world, and so they come to consider them good. In this respect methinks they are like those unhappy heretics, who wish to blind themselves, and then persuade themselves that those opinions which they follow are sound; and so they believe them to be true, though in reality it is not the case, for they have something within them which tells them they are wrong. O the misery, the extreme misery, of those Religious (and I speak now of men as well as women), among whom discipline is not observed, and where in the same monastery two different ways are kept: one, the way of virtue and discipline; and the other quite the opposite, though both are considered almost alike—or rather, I should say, just the same. On account of our sins, it happens that we walk along that way which is the most dangerous; and as the greater number go along it, this makes the road more agreeable to us. Thus so little is true religion observed, that both religious men and women, who wish to commence in earnest to follow their vocation, have *more* reason to fear the very persons with whom they live, than even the devils themselves: and they are obliged to be more cautious in speaking of the love which they ought to have for God, than of those friendships and affections which the devil introduces into these monasteries. I see no reason, then, why we should be astonished on beholding so many evils in the Church, since those who ought to be patterns of virtue to others, have allowed the spirit of their holy

founders to be extinguished in them. May God apply such a remedy as He sees necessary. Amen.

In the meantime, when I began to use such conversations as these, I little thought that so great distractions and other damages would come to my soul by such kind of acquaintances, since I saw they were so much used by others; and I conceived, that so general a thing as it is to make visits, in many monasteries, would be no greater prejudice to *me* than it was to others whom I knew to be good. But I considered not that those others were much more virtuous than myself; and that those things which were of greater danger to me, were not, perhaps, so very dangerous to them; though yet I fear there must be some danger; and, at best, I am quite sure that it is no better than time very ill spent. Being once with a certain person, our Lord was pleased to give me to understand, in the very beginning of our acquaintance, that such friendships would in no way be profitable to me; for Christ our Lord represented Himself before me with great severity (in His countenance), and gave me to understand how much He was disgusted at my conduct. I saw Him only with the eyes of my soul, but yet much more distinctly and more clearly than I could possibly have done with the eyes of my body: and He remained so deeply imprinted there, that although this happened to me above twenty-six years ago, methinks He is still as present to me *now* as he was then. I became so altered, and was also so astonished, that I intended to see that person no more. It did me a great deal of harm that I knew not, at the time, it was possible for one to see anything but with the eyes of the body; and the devil was careful enough to make me continue in that erroneous opinion, and to make me still believe it was impossible, and therefore that I had but fancied these things to myself, and that perhaps it might be a delusion; though I was still convinced it was God, and no delusion at all. But, because it was against my inclination, I tried to deceive myself; and as I durst not confer with any one about the matter, though greatly importuned to do it, assuring myself that there could be no evil in seeing such a person, and that there would be no loss, but rather gain by it, I returned to the same conversation, and even on some

occasions to others ; and for many years I took this pestilential recreation ; and being once engaged in it, it seemed to me not to be so very bad as it indeed was, though sometimes I perceived clearly enough that it was not good. But yet no other conversation distracted me so much as this did, on account of the great affection I had for the person.

Another time, when I was in company with the same individual, both of us saw coming towards us (and there were others also present who saw it), something in the shape of a great toad, which passed on with much greater speed than such animals usually do. I could not understand how such a filthy beast could get into the room, through that part whence it came, and even at noon-day ; such a thing had never been seen there before. The effect which this appearance wrought in me seems not to have been without some mystery, and it was an event which I could never forget. Oh, Greatness of God ! with how much care and pity didst thou admonish me in so many ways, and how little was the profit I derived thereby !

There was in this house a certain elderly nun, a great servant of God, and who was a relation of mine : she sometimes gave me good advice ; but I not only not believed her, but I was even disgusted with her, thinking she was offended with me without cause. All this I relate here, in order that both my wickedness and the great goodness of God may be the better understood, and that it may appear how well I deserved hell for my ingratitude : and another object I also have, that if our Lord should so ordain, and should be pleased that any religious women should read this discourse, they may take warning by me. I beg of them, for the love of our Lord, that they will fly from such recreations as these ; and I beseech His Majesty, that some of those whom I have deceived may be disabused, for I told them there was no harm in those things ; and (being in great blindness at that time) I assured them also there was no danger ; and, as I have before said, by the bad example which I gave them, I was the cause of much harm to them, though I thought I was doing no harm at all.

While I was yet very infirm in those first days, before I knew how to help myself, I conceived an extreme desire to

do others good, which is a very common temptation for beginners, though it happened to succeed well with me. As I loved my father very dearly, I desired he might receive the same benefit which I thought I had gained myself, by means of mental prayer; and being of opinion, that in this life there was no greater blessing than to practice such kind of prayer, I began, by indirect discourses, to try all in my power that he might obtain it, and for this object I gave him some books. Being so virtuous a man, as I have already mentioned, he applied himself so diligently to this exercise, that within five or six years he advanced so much, that I blessed our Lord very much for the favor, and it gave me the greatest consolation. The troubles he endured were various and very severe, all of which he endured with much conformity (to God's will). He often came to see me, and derived great comfort by speaking on holy things. But when now I was living in such distraction that I left off mental prayer, and as I saw that he still thought me to be the very same that I had been before, I was not able to endure this without undecieving him. I had passed a year and more without prayer, thinking it was more humility in me to abstain, which was the greatest temptation I ever had, as I shall afterwards mention, for by this means I ran headlong towards my total ruin; whereas, when I practiced prayer, if I offended God one day, I recollected myself the next, and removed myself farther from the occasion. Wherefore, as my good father came when I was in this state, thinking that I still conversed with God, as I formerly had done, it was too much for me to see him so greatly deceived; and so I told him that I no longer used mental prayer, though I did not mention the cause. I alleged, however, my infirmities as the obstacle; for although I had recovered from my severe illness, still I always had afflictions, and very great ones too; of late years they were not indeed so violent and painful, but they failed not still to continue in many ways. For twenty years together, in particular, I had vomitings every morning to such a degree, that I could never break my fast till noon was over—yea, and sometimes *later*. That I am now able to receive the blessed Sacrament more frequently proceeds from this cause—that these vomitings come on at

night before I go to bed, and then they give much more pain, for I am obliged to hasten them by means of feathers and other things; because if I have not these vomits, the pain which I feel is extreme. But I think I am seldom or ever without many pains, and sometimes these are very sharp, especially at my heart, though still all my sickness, &c., which used to come upon me so thickly, now come only seldom—such as the dreadful palsy, and other fevers, which used to attack me, so that now I often find myself in good health. But I have made so little account of these sufferings for the last eight years, that sometimes I am even glad I have them, thinking that our Lord may be somewhat served thereby. As my father believed that this was the cause of my omission, and as he never told an untruth himself, he had no reason to think but that I told the truth, considering on what subject I was then discoursing with him. And that he might believe me the more, I told him also that I had enough to do to be able to assist in the choir (though I saw clearly this was not a sufficient excuse), to make me omit such a practice, since for such an action there is no need of corporal strength, but only of love and habit, because our Lord will always give us an opportunity, if we ourselves have the will and inclination. I say, “*always*,” because, though infirmities and other causes may sometimes hinder one from spending many hours in solitude, yet we shall have some other times wherein we may have health enough for being in solitude, and even during the same sickness; for, on such occasions, the best prayer may be made (since it is the soul which loves), by offering up our pains to God; by remembering for whose sake they are endured; and by conforming ourselves to His will, and in a thousand other ways that may offer themselves. Thus we may exercise our love; for there is no necessity, either for one to be in solitude, or to use mental prayer at all. If we take a little care, we may obtain great blessings, even when our Lord takes away from us opportunities for prayer, by sending us sickness: and I myself found this to be true, as long as I kept my conscience pure. But my father, through the opinion which he had of me, and the love he bore me, not only believed all I said, but pitied me. As he now found himself raised to such an

eminent degree of prayer, he did not remain very long with me, considering his stay to be loss of time, and therefore he returned home. Being desirous of spending my time on other vanities, I was little troubled at his departure.

But I not only persuaded him, but others also, to apply themselves to prayer, even while I was in the midst of these vanities ; as I found them fond of vocal prayer, I told them how to make use of meditation, and gave them books and did them good, for I still had a desire that others should serve God, even from the time that I began to practice mental prayer, as I before mentioned. It seemed to me, that as I did not serve our Lord so well as I should, I was desirous that the light which His Majesty had bestowed upon me might not be lost, but that others should serve Him by my means. I relate this here to show the great blindness in which I was, which exposed me to the danger of losing myself, while I was endeavoring to do good to others.

About this time my father fell ill of the sickness of which he died, and which continued only a few days. I went to attend him, being more sick in my soul than he was in the body, on account of my numerous vanities, though not to such a degree as to think I was in mortal sin, even in the worst time of my wickedness ; for, certainly, if I had thought so, I would never have continued therein. I suffered much during his illness, and I think, in some slight way, I made up for the trouble he took with me when I was ill. Though very unwell then, I endeavored to assist him all I could ; for I reflected how in losing him, I should lose all my joy and comfort, for in him I placed them. But I animated myself in such a way as not to show him I was in any pain, and continued till he expired as if I felt no trouble at all ; though when I saw him on the point of death, it seemed as if my soul had been torn from my body, for I loved him much.

The death of my father caused me to praise our Lord, together with the desire he had to die, and the good counsels he gave us after he had received extreme unction ; and how he charged us to recommend him to God, and to beg for mercy for him, exhorting us always to serve Him, and to consider how everything comes to an end. He told us also, with tears, how very grieved he was at not having served God better,

and that he wished he had been a Religious in the strictest Order that existed. I consider it certain, that, some fifteen days before, our Lord gave him to understand he was to die ; because before that time he did not think himself very ill, though he was so in reality ; but afterwards, though he seemed to grow better, and the doctors told him so, yet he paid no attention to them, but only thought of putting his soul in order. His sickness began with a very grievous pain in his shoulders, which never left him, and sometimes it was so severe that he suffered exceedingly. I told him that since he had been so devoted to that part of our Lord's passion in which He carried His cross, he should consider our Lord was pleased that he should feel something of what He himself then suffered ; and he was so comforted by this thought, that I do not remember to have heard him complain any more. For three days he seemed to have lost his reason ; but, on the day he died, our Lord restored it to him so entirely, that we were all amazed thereat ; and so he continued reciting the Creed, and when he came to the middle of it he expired. When he was dead, he looked like an angel ; and such, in my opinion, he was (so to speak), both in soul and disposition ; this latter was extremely good. I do not know why I have spoken so much of him, unless it be to condemn my own wickedness, inasmuch as, after having witnessed such a death, and known he led such a life, I ought to have reformed mine, so as to have in some degree resembled my father. His confessor, who was a Dominican, and a very learned man, asserted that he had no doubt my father would go straight to heaven ; for he had been his confessor for many years, and spoke much of the purity of his conscience.

This Dominican father, being a very worthy man, and a true servant of God, did me a great deal of good, for I "confessed" to him : he undertook the care of my soul with great diligence, and made me understand the way of perdition, in which I was walking. He also made me communicate every fifteen days ; and when I spoke to him about the nature of my prayer, he told me I must not fail to use it, for that I could not in any way practice it without deriving advantage. I began, therefore, to use it again ; and from that time forward I never left it off, though I did not then quit the occasions

of sin. In the mean time I passed a most miserable life, for in my prayer I came to know my faults; God called me on the one hand, and on the other the world; all the things of God gave me great pleasure, but the vanities of the world held me in chains; and it seems I had a desire to reconcile these two contraries, which are such enemies one to another, viz., a spiritual life, and the pleasures and pastimes of the world. In prayer I endured great affliction, because my soul was not master, but a slave; and thus I was unable to retire within my heart (which was my method of proceeding I formerly used in prayer), without at the same time shutting up with me a thousand vanities. In this way I passed several years, so that I am now astonished how it happened that I did not correct my faults, or that I did not abandon prayer. I know well that it was no longer in my power to abandon prayer, for He held me in His hands who had resolved to do me greater favors. Oh! that I could declare the occasions of doing ill, which God removed from me in those years, and how I put myself again into them; that I could mention the danger I was in, from which he delivered me, of losing all my reputation; how I endeavored to discover by my actions what kind of a creature I was, and how our Lord concealed my faults, and made me know the little virtue I possessed,—if indeed I had any at all,—so that it appeared great in the eyes of all men, in such a way that they always esteemed me much. For though my vanities sometimes shone through my actions, yet, as they noticed other things in me which appeared good, they would not believe my wickedness. But the cause of this was, that He who knoweth all things saw this was necessary, in order that when afterwards I should exhort persons to devote themselves to His service, they might give me some credit. His sovereign goodness did not so much consider my great sins, as those desires which I sometimes felt to serve Him, and the great trouble I experienced in not having strength to execute them.

But, O thou Lord of my soul! how shall I be able to express with gratitude the favors Thou didst bestow on me during these years? And how, at the very time I was offending Thee most, Thou didst in a short time dispose me for a most profound sorrow, that so I might enjoy Thy favors

and consolations. The truth is, O my King! Thou didst adopt as one means, the most exquisite and sharp kind of punishment which could be found for me: for 'Thou knewest well what would prove most afflicting to me, viz.—that my sins should be punished by receiving sorrow from Thee! It is no foolish thing which I utter, though one should not be surprised if I became foolish, when I recall the memory of my ingratitude and wickedness against Thee. But it was much more grievous for me to receive favors, when at the same time I was committing great faults, than it would have been to have endured severe punishments: hence, *even one* of those favors received seems capable of confounding and afflicting me, more than many corporal infirmities and other troubles united. As to the latter, I saw that I deserved them, and I thought I had made some satisfaction by them for my sins, though all indeed were but little, considering the multitude of my sins. But to see myself again receiving fresh favors, though I made such a bad return for those I had received before, was a most terrible punishment for me: and I think it will be considered so by all who have any knowledge or love of God. Hence flowed my tears and came my indignation, seeing what I found in myself, that I was still on the point of falling again, though my desires and resolutions were then firm—I mean as long as the favors lasted. It is a great misfortune for a soul to be alone amidst such dangers; and methinks if I knew any one to whom I could have spoken on these matters, it would have helped me from not falling again: at least, I should have been prevented through shame, even had I no shame in offending God.

Those, therefore, who make use of mental prayer, especially at the beginning thereof, would do well to be on terms of friendship and familiarity with other persons who practice this kind of prayer; for this is very important, though it should serve no other purpose than to be assisted by each other's prayers, and how much more so when so many advantages are to be gained! And if in the commerce and intercourse of the world, though vain and useless it be, we endeavor to procure friends to assuage our sorrows, and to make us enjoy ourselves the more by the recital of our vain pleasures, I do not see why they who begin to love and

serve God in earnest, should not be permitted to communicate to some one their joys and their sorrows—for those who practice prayer, experience both. For if he be sincere who desires to be in friendship with His Majesty, he need not fear vain-glory : and should he be attacked by any temptations thereto, he will come off with merit. I believe that whoever shall, with this intention, speak to others on such matters, will both profit himself and those who hear him, and will also become more enlightened in his understanding, as well as more skilful in instructing his friends. He who should be exposed to vain-glory when thus speaking, would also be exposed whenever he is seen devoutly to hear Mass, and by doing other things likewise which he is bound to do—under pain of not being a good Christian : and yet these things must not be omitted, through fear of vain-glory.

This point is of such great importance for the welfare of all those souls who are not yet strengthened in virtue (as there are so many adversaries, and even friends, ready to excite them to evil), that I know not how to express its importance. It seems to me, that the devil has made use of this device—as being something very advantageous to him—viz., that men should as carefully hide themselves from those who understand them, and who sincerely endeavor to make them love and please God, as he (the devil) has induced others to discover their evil inclinations to each other ; and this latter practice is now so common, as to pass for a kind of gallantry—and thus men publish the offences which, by this means, they commit against God.

I know not if what I say be nonsense ; if it be, I trust your Reverence will tear it up ; but if not, I beseech you to assist my simplicity, by adding much of your own experience to the subject. For divine things are now so little attended to, that they who desire to serve God have need of each other's help in order to advance in virtue ; so very much in fashion are the vanities and pleasures of the world, that few see any evil in them. But whenever any one begins to give himself to God, so many blame him, that he will find it necessary to seek for some one to defend him, until he shall become strong enough not to be uneasy under suffering ; but should he be sorrowful, he may himself fall into great

difficulties. This, perhaps, may be the reason why some saints have retired into deserts. But as it is a part of humility not to put any confidence in one's self, so we should believe that God will not fail to help us to live among those with whom we are obliged to converse. And thus charity will increase by being communicated; and there are a thousand other benefits, of which I should not dare to speak, had I not great experience of their importance. True it is, that I am both the weakest and the most wicked of all creatures: but yet I believe, that whoever will humble himself—though he be strong—and not trust in himself, but in one who has experience in these matters, will not lose anything. Respecting myself, I am able to say, that if our Lord had not discovered this truth to me, and had not also given me means to treat, in a very familiar manner, with persons who were given to mental prayer, I should still have gone over—falling and rising—till I had fallen headlong into hell. For I had many friends who would have helped me to fall: but in endeavoring to rise up again, I found myself so much alone, that now I am astonished I did not always remain in a fallen state. I praise the mercy of God, for He alone it was who gave me a helping hand: may he be praised forever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHE MENTIONS WHAT GREAT GOOD HER SOUL RECEIVED BY NOT HAVING ENTIRELY GIVEN UP HER METHOD OF PRAYER: ALSO, WHAT AN EXCELLENT REMEDY PRAYER IS FOR GAINING WHAT WE HAVE LOST.

NOT without reason have I been considering so long this life of mine; for I clearly see that it will give no pleasure to any one, to look upon such a wicked creature as myself. And really I should be glad that all those who read this account would abhor me, in seeing a soul so obstinate and so ungrateful towards Him, who has bestowed so many favors on her. And I wish I could obtain leave to declare the many times I failed, during this period, in my obligations to God, because I was not supported by this strong pillar of

mental prayer. I passed through this tempestuous sea almost twenty years, between these fallings and risings (though I rose very imperfectly, since I fell again so quickly); and in this kind of life, which was so far below perfection, I made almost no account of venial sins; and for mortal ones, I feared them it is true, but not so much as I ought to have done, since I did not avoid the dangerous occasions. I can declare, that this was one of the most painful kinds of life which can be imagined, for I neither enjoyed the sweetness of God, nor the pleasures of the world. When I was entertaining myself with the amusements of the world, the remembrance of what I owed to God gave me pain; and when I was conversing with Him in prayer, the affections I had for the world disturbed me; and this was a conflict so very painful, that I know not how it was possible for me to endure it for one month, much more for so many years. Herein I clearly see the great mercy God showed me, that, dealing so much as I did with the world, I could still have the *courage* to apply myself to mental prayer. I say "courage," because I see not one thing in the world in which there seems to be need of greater, than to be carrying on treason against a King, and to be sensible that He knows it well, and yet never to depart from His presence. For though it be true, that we are always in the presence of God, yet, methinks that they who converse with Him in mental prayer, are in a special manner in His presence, because then they see that He regards them; whereas others may remain some days in His presence, without remembering that He looks upon them. True it is that within this time there were, I believe, many months, and sometimes perhaps a whole year, that I kept myself from offending our Lord; and I gave myself much to prayer, and I used some, and even great diligence, that I might never offend Him more; and this I here declare, because what I write now is to be delivered with truth; but I remember little of those good days, and therefore it may be thought they were few, and the evil ones many; yet few days passed without my giving a considerable time to prayer, unless I were very sick, or extremely busy. The more ill I was, the more was I united with God; and I endeavored that those persons who were then with me might

be so too ; and this I begged of our Lord, and we spoke very often of Him. And so, with the exception of that one year of which I have spoken, during the eight-and-twenty years which have passed since first I began to use mental prayer, I have endured this battle and strife for more than eighteen, through conversing with God and the world at the same time. In those other years of which I have yet to speak, the cause of the war was changed, though this has not been inconsiderable. But as I was then, I think, in the service of God, and had a knowledge of the vanity of the world, all was sweet and pleasant, as I shall declare afterwards.

Now the reason why I have given this account is, first, in order that the mercy of God and my ingratitude towards Him may be discerned as I have before mentioned ; and secondly, that it may be understood how great a blessing God bestows on that soul, which He disposes to practice mental prayer with a good will, even though she were not so well prepared for it as she should be. But if she persevere therein, whatever sins she may commit, whatever temptations may be presented to her, or whatever falls she may receive in a thousand different ways from the devil, I consider it certain that our Lord will, in the end, bring her safe to the port of salvation, as (it seems now) He has done so to me ; may His Majesty grant that I may never again expose myself to be lost. Many holy and good men have written on the benefits he obtains, who exercises himself in prayer—I mean mental prayer ; and glory be to God for it. And even if this were not true, though I have but little humility, yet I am not so proud as to venture to speak on this subject.

But I may presume to say something of that, concerning which I have some experience ; and it is this, that whoever has begun mental prayer, I wish him not to give it up, whatever sins he may commit in the mean time, since this is the means by which he may recover himself again ; but without it, he will find the work much more difficult. And let not the devil tempt him, as he did me, to leave it off through a motive of humility ; but let him firmly believe that God's word cannot fail ; that if we truly repent, and are determined not to offend Him any more, He will restore us to the same friendship we enjoyed before, and bestow on us the same

favours we received before, and sometimes even *greater*, if our repentance should deserve it. Whoever has not commenced this exercise, I beseech him, for the love of our Lord, not to deprive himself of so great a benefit. Here we have nothing to fear, but much to desire; for though one should not advance much, nor strive to be so perfect as to deserve those favours and caresses which God gives to perfect souls, yet, the least which he will obtain will be, to advance along the path that leads to heaven, and to know that it is the right way. I trust in the mercy of God, that no one ever made choice of Him for a friend, whom He did not well repay, if he persevered; for mental prayer is nothing else, in my opinion, than a treaty of friendship with our Lord, often speaking alone with Him, who we know loves us. And if you love Him not yet (for, in order that your love may be sincere and the friendship may last, the conditions must be reciprocal; and we know that nothing will be wanting on our Lord's part, and that our nature is vicious, sensual, and ungrateful); I repeat, if you do not as yet love Him so much, on account of the difference which exists between His nature and ours, yet, considering how important it is that we should be on terms of friendship with Him, and how much He loves us, we must bear patiently the pain of conversing often with One whose nature is so different from ours. Oh! infinite goodness of my God! it seems to me that I see Thee and see myself in this manner. Oh! joy of the angels! how I desire, when I consider these things, to be dissolved in loving Thee. How certain is it, that Thou dost suffer much, when we do not allow Thee to be with us! Oh! what a good friend Thou art, my Lord, since Thou continuest to caress us, and patiently to bear with us! And Thou waitest, till we make ourselves like to Thee, and in the mean time Thou dost endure our corrupt nature. Thou takest into account, my Lord, the few hours during which we love Thee; and by one single act of repentance on our part, Thou forgettest all our offences. All this I have clearly seen in my own case; and I cannot understand, O my Creator, why the whole world does not strive to draw near unto Thee, in order to share in this close friendship. The wicked, who are not of the same nature with Thee, should come to Thee, that Thou mayest

make them good, and that they may suffer Thee to be with them, though it were only for two hours in the day; yea, though it were with a thousand distracting cares and thoughts of the world, as I myself was accustomed to have. And to recompense the violence they use, in order to make themselves *love* being in Thy company (for neither in these beginnings, nor afterwards, can they avoid these distractions), Thou obligest, O Lord, the devils to abstain from attacking them, and each day Thou dost lessen their power over them, and thou givest them strength to overcome these evil spirits. O Life of all lives! Thou dost never destroy any one who puts his confidence in Thee, nor any one who desires Thee for a friend: but Thou sustainest the life of the body with increased health, and Thou givest the same to the soul.

For my part, I cannot understand why men should fear, as they do, to begin the practice of mental prayer, nor do I know what they are afraid of. The devil, however, strives all he can to make us fearful (in order to do us thereby some real evil) of thinking how much we have offended God; how much we owe Him; that there is a heaven and a hell, and what great labors and sufferings our Lord endured for our sake. This was my prayer, which I continued during all the time I was in these dangers; and thus did I meditate whenever I was able. And often, for some years, I was more desirous that the hour should end, and more anxious to hear the clock strike, than to attend to other good things. And many times it happened, that whatever penance was set before me, however great, I would more willingly have performed it than prepare myself for prayer. And it is certain that the violence which the devil employed against me was either so insupportable, or my own wicked habits were so great, that I was induced not to go to prayer; and the sadness of my heart was such when I entered into my oratory, that all my courage was necessary to help me to force myself: at last, our Lord was pleased to assist me; and people say the courage I have is not little; and it seems our Lord has given me greater than is usually given to women, but I have made a very bad use of it: but afterwards, when I had made use of this violence, I found myself in the enjoyment of more quiet and more consolation, so

that sometimes I had a desire to pray. Since, then, our Lord endured for so long a time such a wicked creature as myself—and it appears clear that all my evils were remedied by this means (of prayer)—what person, however wicked he may be, can have any reason to be afraid? For, how wicked soever he may have been, yet he cannot be so bad as I was during many years, after I had received so many favors from our Lord. And who can distrust our Lord, since He bore with me so long, and for this sole reason, because I desired and procured some time and place in which He might be with me? And this I often did, without any inclination of my own, but only by the great violence which I either offered to myself, or which our Lord offered to me. If, therefore, the use of mental prayer be so proper—and even so necessary for those who do not serve God, but offend him; and since no one can possibly find it can do him any harm, which would not be much greater without prayer, how can they omit it who serve God and desire to love Him? Most certainly, unless a man wishes to pass through the troubles of this life with still more numerous troubles, and to close the gate against God himself, lest He should by this means give him comfort, I cannot understand his manner of proceeding. I have, indeed, much compassion for those souls who serve God at their own cost; but as for those who use mental prayer, our Lord bears their expenses, and repays the little trouble they endure with many pleasures, that so they may bear those troubles for His sake. Concerning those caresses which our Lord gives to those who persevere in prayer, I shall speak more at length further on, and shall say nothing here. I will only mention, that prayer was the gate through which God bestowed on me such great favors: if that be closed, I know not how He will bestow them, because though he should desire to enter a soul, to regale both Himself and her, He has no means of doing so, because He wishes to have her all to Himself, to be pure, and to be desirous of receiving favors. If we put any obstacles in the way, and do nothing to remove them, how can we expect Him to come to us, or desire that He should bestow great favors upon us?

In order that His mercy may be seen, and the great benefit

it was for me, not to have omitted prayer and reading, I will here mention (since to understand this point is very important) what kind of a battery the devil raises against a soul, in order to gain her; and with what art and mercy our Lord endeavors to draw her to Himself, in order that others may be on their guard against those dangers to which I exposed myself: but, above all things, by the great love with which our Lord seeks to draw us to Himself, I entreat others, for the love of God, to keep themselves from dangerous occasions; for when we are in the midst of them, there can be no security against so many enemies who attack us, especially as we are so weak in defending ourselves. I wish I could here describe the captivity in which my soul was bound in those days; for I knew well I was a captive, but yet I could not understand to what I was a slave, nor could I wholly believe that what my confessors represented as trifling, was so very bad, as I felt it to be in my soul. A certain person once told me, when I went to him with a scruple, that although I should practice the highest degree of contemplation, yet such occasions and conversations were not prejudicial to me. This happened to me towards the end, when, by the grace of God, I was separating myself more and more from great dangers. When they observed me to have good desires, and to follow the exercise of prayer, they thought I did a great deal; but my soul knew well, that this was not doing all I was obliged to do, for One to whom I owed so much. I am now grieved when I consider how much my soul suffered, and what little help she received from any one but God, and how many opportunities I had for pleasures and pastimes, by being told they were lawful. But the torment which I endured by hearing sermons was not little, for I was particularly fond of them; in so much so, that whenever I heard any one preach well, and with animation, I conceived a particular love for him, without endeavoring to feel it, though I know not how I came to have it. It seemed to me, that no sermon could ever be so bad which I would not willingly listen to, although, in the opinion of others who heard it, the sermon might not have been good; but when it was, it gave me particular pleasure. I was seldom or ever tired with speaking of God, or with hearing Him spoken of: this

was after I had begun to use mental prayer. On the one hand, sermons gave me great consolation, but on the other, they tormented me, because by them I understood that I was far from being what I ought to be. I begged of our Lord to help me; but, as far as I can judge, I was to blame for not putting my whole confidence in His Majesty, and entirely distrusting myself. I sought for a remedy, and I was diligent therein; but I understood not that all is of little use, unless we strip ourselves of all confidence in ourselves, and put all our trust in God. I desired to lead a true life, for I knew well I was not doing so then, but that I was fighting with the shadow of death, and there was no one who could give me life. I could not take it myself, and He who could give it to me had reason enough not to help me, since He had so often drawn me to Himself, and I had left Him.

CHAPTER IX.

SHE DECLARES BY WHAT MEANS OUR LORD BEGAN TO AWAKEN HER SOUL, AND TO ENLIGHTEN HER IN SUCH GREAT DARKNESS.

BUT now my soul began to grow weary; and yet the bad habits which I had acquired would not permit her, though she desired it, to take any repose. It happened one day, that I went into the oratory to see a picture which had been brought there, to be kept for a certain festival which was celebrated in the house, and when I looked upon it I was much affected; it was Christ our Lord, all covered with wounds; and being devoutly made, it represented very well all that He had suffered for us. The sense of the little gratitude I had showed to our Lord for all these wounds was such, that I thought my heart would break; and so I cast myself down near the picture, shedding floods of tears, and beseeching God to strengthen me once for all, that so I might never more offend Him.

I was very much devoted to the glorious Mary Magdalen, and I very often thought of her conversion, especially when I received the holy communion; for as I certainly knew our Lord was within me at that time, I placed myself at His

feet, thinking my tears would not be despised by Him. I know not what I said then ; but still I know, that He who was pleased I should shed those tears did bestow favors on me, since I forgot so soon those tender feelings. I also recommended myself to this glorious saint, that she might help me to obtain the pardon of my sins.

But I think that I gained more profit on this last occasion, when I prayed before the picture, because I had a great distrust in myself, and placed all my confidence in God. It seems to me that I then told Him I would never rise from that place till He had granted my petition ; and I am firmly persuaded this did me good, for I have gone on improving much ever since that time. This was my method of prayer : not being able to discourse with my understanding, I endeavored to represent Christ as *within* me ; and I thought I always found myself better, when I saw Him in places where He was most alone ; for, being alone and afflicted, it seemed as if He would then admit me, as a person in great misery. I had many of these simplicities, and especially I found much profit in the prayer made by our Saviour in the garden : there I was accustomed to accompany Him. I thought on His bloody sweat, and the great torment He then endured ; and I desired to wipe off that most painful sweat from His face ; but I remember that I never dared presume to do this, so grievously did my sins represent themselves to me. However, I remained by Him, as well as my thoughts would allow, because many were the thoughts which tormented me most nights, during many years. Before I went to sleep, and was recommending myself to God, I always thought a little on the prayer in the garden, even before I was a Religious, for I had been told I could gain many indulgences thereby. I think I gained much by this means, for I began to use mental prayer, without knowing what it was ; and it was as usual with me not to omit this practice, as to omit blessing myself before I fell asleep.

But, to return to what I was saying respecting the torment which my thoughts gave me. This method of proceeding without the help of the understanding is such, that the soul either gains or loses much by it. She loses, when all consideration is gone ; and she gains much, because all such

prayer is love. But to arrive at this point will cost us a great deal of trouble, with the exception of those persons whom our Lord pleases to conduct, in a short time, to the prayer of quiet: and some such persons I know. But for those who go along this way, it is good to use a book, in order to recollect themselves quickly. As to myself, I received profit in looking upon the fields, flowers, and water: in these things I found something to remind me of our Creator—I mean, they served to awaken and keep me recollected, and they were as a book to me: they also brought to mind my sins and ingratitude. As regards heavenly things and other such high subjects, my understanding was so dull, that I was never able to represent them to my imagination, until our Lord represented them to me by other means.

I had so little ability in representing things to my mind by means of the understanding, that my imagination availed me nothing, except only respecting things which I saw; and yet others are able to do this, because they know how to form representations, by which they are enabled to recollect themselves. I could only think on Christ our Lord as man; and it is quite true, that how much soever I read of His beauty, or saw pictures of Him, yet I could never represent Him to myself, but was just like one who was either blind or in the dark; for though he may speak with another person, and know that he is with him, because he is sure this said person is there, yet, he only knows and believes him to be present, for he does not see him. In like manner it happened to me, whenever I thought of our Lord: this was the reason I was so fond of pictures. Miserable creatures are they who, through their own fault, lose this benefit. It appears clear to me that they do not love our Lord; for, if they loved Him, they would be glad to see His pictures, just as in this life we are glad to see the image of one whom we love.

About this time the “Confessions” of St. Augustine were given to me: and it seems our Lord so ordained it, for neither did I procure them, nor had I ever seen them before. I had a very great affection for this saint, because the monastery where I lived a secular was of his order, and also because he had been a sinner; for I found much comfort in

those saints, who, after having been sinners, were converted to our Lord, thinking that I should be helped by them, and that our Lord would be pleased to forgive *me* as He had them. But one consideration discouraged me, which was, that our Lord called them but once, and they fell from Him no more; but my falls were so numerous, that I was afflicted exceedingly on this account. But yet, when I considered the love He bore me, I was encouraged, for I never distrusted in His mercy, though in myself I did very often. Oh my God, how astonished I am at that obstinacy of mine, during which I continued to receive so many helps from Thy hand! I am fearful when I consider how little I was able to do with myself, and how I remained still tied, and determined not to give myself wholly to Thee. But when I began to read the "Confessions," I thought I saw myself described therein, and I recommended myself earnestly to this glorious saint. When I came to the account of his "conversion," and read how he heard that voice in the garden, it was, I thought, as if our Lord Himself spoke to me, so lively was the feeling of my heart. For some time I was entirely dissolved in tears, and felt great affliction and anguish within me. Oh my God, how much does a soul suffer, after losing her liberty of being mistress over herself! And what torments does she not endure! I wonder how I was able to live in such great trouble. But, blessed be God, who gave me life, that I might escape from so deadly a death; methought I obtained great strength from His Majesty, and that He would now hear my cries, and have compassion on all my tears.

My desire to spend more time with Him began also to increase, and to draw myself from all evil occasions; for when once they were removed, I immediately began again to love His Majesty—at least, I thought I then loved Him; but, in reality, I understood not, as I ought to have understood, in what the love of God consisted. As far as I remember, I had scarcely finished disposing myself, and wishing to serve Him, when His Majesty began to caress me. It seems that what others endeavored to acquire by great labor, our Lord caressed me in such a way as to make me desirous of receiving it, viz., His giving me delights and caresses in these

latter years. I was never so bold as to beseech Him to give me any tenderness of devotion ; but I only begged of Him to give me grace not to offend Him any more, and that He would pardon my great sins : and seeing how numerous they were, I never intentionally presumed to desire either delights or caresses. I thought He showed me pity enough ; and truly great was His mercy towards me, in allowing me to appear before His presence ; for I knew that if He had not done so, I should never have come. Only once in my life I remember having asked of Him to give me some consolations, and this was when I had great dryness of devotion ; but as soon as I reflected on what I had done, I was so confused, that the very grief I felt in seeing what little humility I possessed, obtained for me what I had not dared to ask for. I knew well, however, it was lawful to pray for it : but I thought this was true for those only who were disposed to receive it, by their having endeavored, with all their strength, to acquire true devotion ; and this consists in not offending God, and in being disposed and resolved to do everything that is good. And methought that those tears of mine were feminine tears, without any efficacy, since I did not obtain that by them which I desired, though yet upon the whole I believe they were useful to me ; because (as I have said) especially after that great compunction I felt on those two several occasions, and the pain I had at my heart, I began to give myself more to prayer, and not to interest myself so much in those things which might do me hurt. I did not, however, entirely leave them aside : but (as I was mentioning) God continued helping me to withdraw myself from them ; for His Majesty was only waiting for some preparation on my part, that so His spiritual favors might increase in the manner I shall relate : our Lord is not accustomed to grant them, except to those only who keep their conscience in greater purity than I did.

CHAPTER X.

THE SAINT BEGINS TO MENTION THE FAVORS OUR LORD BESTOWED UPON HER IN PRAYER, AND SHE SPEAKS OF THE MANNER IN WHICH WE MAY HELP OURSELVES, ETC.

As I have already mentioned, I sometimes had certain beginnings of that which I shall now relate, though it passed quickly away. It happened in this representation, when I placed myself near Christ (of which I have been speaking), and sometimes also when I was reading, that there would suddenly come upon me such a feeling of the presence of God, that I could in no ways doubt but that He was with me, or else I was engulfed in Him. This was not in the manner of a vision, but I think they call it "mystical theology," which suspends the soul in such a manner that she seems to be wholly out of herself. The will loves; the memory seems to me to be almost lost, and the understanding does not discourse, as far as I can judge, though it be not lost; yet it works not, as I was saying, but remains as if astonished at considering how much it understands; because God is pleased it should know that it comprehends nothing of that which His Majesty represents to it. At first, I very frequently enjoyed a certain tenderness, which in some measure, it seems to me, may be procured; it is a pleasure which is neither wholly sensual nor wholly spiritual: it is all the gift of God. But it seems we can help ourselves a great deal in the acquisition of it, by considering our own baseness and our ingratitude towards God; how much He has done for us; His passion and grievous torments; His whole life, which was so afflicted; by taking delight in considering His works, His greatness, how much He loves us, and many other such things. Whoever earnestly desires to profit by these, will often meditate upon them, though he may not intentionally walk along this path. And if, together with these reflections, there be some love united, the soul will be caressed, the heart softened, and tears will flow; sometimes it seems we obtain these by force; and at other times our Lord gives them to us, so that we are not able to resist them.

Now, it appears that His Majesty is pleased to repay us for the slight care [we take to serve Him],* by that gift which is so great, viz., the consolation He bestows on that soul, whom He beholds weeping for having offended so great a Lord; and I wonder not at her being consoled so much; for in this she rejoices—in this she regales herself.

I think the comparison which now offers itself to me is a just one, viz., that these joys of prayer must be something like the joys of heaven; for as they see no more there than what God is pleased they shall see, according to their deserts, and as they see how small those deserts are, every one is content with the place he has, although there is a very great difference in heaven between the joys of some and those of others, as there is here on earth between spiritual pleasures and earthly ones. And truly when God, in the beginning, bestows such favors on a soul, she is then almost convinced there is nothing more to be desired; and she considers herself to be well repaid for all that she has done in the service of God; and with reason does she think so, for even *one* of those tears (which, as I was saying, we might almost procure ourselves,—though without God's assistance we can do nothing) cannot, in my opinion, be purchased by all the labors of the world, because by those tears a soul gains much. And what greater gain can there be, than to have some proof or testimony that we please God? Let him, then, who has arrived at this point praise God exceedingly, and acknowledge that he is greatly in His debt; because it seems evident our Lord desires such an one for His own house, and has chosen him for His kingdom, that so he may turn back no more.

Let us not pay any attention to certain feelings of humility which people have (and whereon I intend to speak); for, to some it seems a part of humility not to understand those gifts which our Lord bestows upon them. But let us know well how the case stands with us, viz., that God does not give us those gifts through our own merit, and that we should be grateful to His Majesty for them; for if we know not what we receive, we cannot excite ourselves to love Him. And it is a

* These words are not in the original.

most certain truth, that when we see ourselves to be very rich (provided that we know we are poor), then more profit comes to us, and our humility becomes even more sincere. The other course tends only to intimidate the soul and to make her think herself incapable of receiving great benefits; viz., if, when once our Lord begins to bestow them, the soul should also begin to terrify herself with the fear of vain-glory. Rather let us believe, that He who gives such favors to us will likewise give us strength to resist the devil, and grace to discover him when he proceeds to attack us on this point. This will be the case if we act with sincerity before God, and desire to please Him alone, and not men. It is very certain, that we love a person the more, when we often call to mind the favors he has conferred upon us. If, then, it be lawful and so meritorious for us, always to remember that we have received our being from God,—that He made us out of nothing,—that He preserves us,—and what benefits we have derived from His death and sufferings, which He endured long before we were created for every one who is now alive,—why should it not be lawful for me to know and to consider how often I was accustomed to be speaking of vain things, but that now our Lord has given me the grace to desire nothing, save to speak of Him? Behold here a jewel, which, when we remember that it has been given to us, and that we now possess it, forces and invites us to love Him!—and all this good comes from prayer, when founded on humility. But what will it be when we shall see in our power other *more precious* jewels, which some servants of God have already received, viz., a contempt of the world, and even of ourselves? It is certain that we shall then consider ourselves greater debtors, and more obliged to serve Him; we shall be convinced that none of these favors come from ourselves, and we shall see the bounty of our Lord, who wished to bestow more riches than I could even desire on a soul so poor and wicked as mine, and without any merit whatever; for the first of these jewels would have been more than sufficient for me. It is necessary to acquire new strength to serve Him, and to endeavor not to prove ungrateful, because our Lord bestows the favors on this condition. And if we should not make a good use of this treasure, and

of the high place He has raised us to, He will take those gifts away from us, and then we shall become much poorer than we were before; and His Majesty will give those jewels to whom He pleases; to one who will benefit himself and others by the good use of them. But how can that man who does not know he is rich, derive any benefit from them, and distribute them to others with liberality? In my opinion it is impossible, considering our nature, that he should have a soul capable of doing great things, who does not know he is assisted by God, because as we are so miserable, and so inclined to the things of earth, we cannot effectually abhor them, unless we feel that we have some relish for heavenly things. It is by these gifts our Lord imparts that fortitude to us which we lost by our sins. And unless a person possess some pledge of God's love towards him, united with a lively faith, he cannot well rejoice at being despised and abhorred by every one, neither can he acquire those other great virtues which the perfect possess. Naturally we are so dead (in faith), that we consider only what we see; and hence these very favors are the means which awaken and strengthen our faith. It may happen, indeed, that being so wicked myself, I judge of others by myself, and that these may require no more than the true faith to make their works perfect. But as I am so very miserable, I stand in need of every help.

Others may say what they think proper, but I relate what I have experienced, following the command of my superiors; and if what I say be not good or proper, he to whom I send the account may tear it in pieces, because he knows what is unfit better than I do. And I beseech him, for the love of our Lord, that he would publish whatever I have said hitherto concerning my sins and wicked life; and from this moment I give leave to my present confessor, and to all who have been my confessors (and he is of the number to whom this account is going), to publish my sins even in my lifetime, if they desire it, that so I may deceive the world no longer, for people may think there is some good in me. And I most sincerely speak the truth, that he who should do so* would give me great consolation. But as

* That is, publish her sins. Here we have one proof, among many others, of the wonderful humility of the Saint.

regards what I shall relate afterwards, I give my confessors no such liberty ; but should they show what I have written to any one, I desire they will not mention who the person is, nor in whom the things happened, nor who wrote the account : and this is the reason why I do not name myself, nor any one else ; but in writing it, I have done my best not to be known ; and I desire it may remain a secret for the love of God. If our Lord shall give me grace to say anything that is good, the approval of grave and learned persons will be sufficient. And should there be anything useful, it will be God's, not mine ; for I have no learning nor goodness, nor have I been taught by any learned person, or by any one else. And they only who command me to write it know that I write it ; and at present they are not here. I write also as if by stealth, and with trouble, because thereby I am kept from spinning ; and I live in a poor house, and have a great deal of business. If our Lord had given me better abilities, and a more retentive memory (both of which are very poor), I might then have profited by what I heard or read. And so if I shall say anything good, our Lord wills it for some good end : but whatever is useless or bad, that will be mine, and your Reverence may blot it out. And neither for the one nor for the other will there be any advantage in mentioning my name. While one is alive, it is clear that his virtues should not be mentioned ; and when dead, the recital of them will serve no other purpose but to make them lose all authority and credit, when it is known the account is given by such a base and miserable creature as myself. And because I think and hope your Reverence will do this (and I beg this favor from you, and from the others who may see the recital, for the love of our Lord), hence I write with such freedom ; for otherwise I should have some scruple in doing so, though in declaring my sins I have none at all. In other things, my being a woman is sufficient to account for my stupidity ; and how much more, since I am a *wicked* woman also !

Whatever, therefore, your Reverence may find, above and in addition to the simple account of my life, you must consider it as intended only for yourself, since you have pressed me so much to give some account of the favors our Lord

bestowed on me in prayer, provided it be in accordance with the doctrines of our holy Catholic Church ; if not, you must instantly burn it, for I submit myself to her authority. I will mention what happened to me, in order that if it shall prove conformable to the Catholic faith, it may be of some service to your Reverence ; and if not, you may be able to undeceive my soul, that so the devil may gain nothing by that wherein I thought I had gained something ; for our Lord knows, as I shall afterwards show, that I always endeavored to meet with persons who could enlighten me.

But however much I desire to speak clearly concerning what relates to prayer, it will be very obscure for him who has no experience therein. I shall also mention some of the impediments which (in my opinion) prevent persons from walking in this way, and other matters in which there may be some danger, according to what our Lord has taught me by experience ; and for many years since I have consulted very learned and spiritual men, who see that during seven-and-twenty years, in which I have used mental prayer (though I have gone on amidst many obstacles, and very badly also), our Lord has given me such experience as He has not given to others during seven-and-thirty, or even seven-and-forty years, though at the same time they had always walked along the path of virtue and of penance. May He be blessed by all men ; and I beseech His Majesty, by what He is Himself, that He may be served by me ; for my Lord knows well that I wish for nothing else, but that He may be a little more praised and exalted ; and seeing He desires to plant a garden of sweet flowers on such a foul dunghill as I am, may His Majesty grant I may not, through my own fault, pull them up, and so become again what I was before ! I entreat your Reverence, for the love of our Lord, to beg this favor of Him for me, since you know what I am more clearly than I have been permitted to express.

CHAPTER XI.

SHE DECLARES IN WHAT THE FAULT CONSISTS OF NOT LOVING GOD WITH PERFECTION IN A SHORT TIME: THIS SHE BEGINS TO DECLARE BY A COMPARISON, CONTAINING FOUR DEGREES OF PRAYER.

IN speaking, then, of those who begin to be servants of love (and it seems to me to be nothing else than to resolve to follow Him, who has loved us so much), I find it to be so great a dignity, that even the very thinking of it delights me in a particular manner; for servile fear goes away immediately, if we conduct ourselves as we ought in this first degree of prayer. O Lord of my soul! and my eternal Good! how is it that when a soul is determined to love Thee, and to do what she can to leave all things, that so she may employ herself the better on this love of Thee—how is it Thou art not pleased that she should immediately rejoice in having attained this perfect love? But no; I ought to have said, it is of *ourselves* that we have reason to complain, because we do not desire it: all the fault is ours in not immediately enjoying this love with perfection: true love of God brings with it every blessing. But we are so fond of ourselves, and so slow in giving ourselves entirely to God, that as His Majesty on the one hand will not allow us to enjoy so precious a treasure without paying a great price for it, so on the other we must never omit disposing ourselves to receive it. I see clearly, that there is nothing on this earth which can purchase so great a treasure; but if we did what we could to prevent ourselves from clinging to the things of this world, and if all our care and conversation were directed to heaven, I am confident that very speedily this blessing would be given to us, if we quickly and entirely were to dispose ourselves to receive it, as some saints have done. But the truth is, we think we give all to God, whereas we offer Him only the rent, or fruits. Keeping in the meantime the roots, and possession of the land ourselves, we resolve to be poor, and this is great merit; but often do we employ all our care and diligence in seeing that we want nothing, not only of

what is necessary, but of what is even superfluous; and we are also careful to meet with friends who will procure these things for us; and thus we expose ourselves to greater trouble, and perhaps greater danger, than we were in before, when we had possession of our own estates; and all that nothing may be wanting to us. It seems, also, that in becoming "religious," or when we begin to lead a spiritual life, and to follow perfection, we cared not for the honor of this world; and yet, as soon as ever our honor is in any degree touched, we forget that we gave it all to God, and we wish to snatch it from the hands of God (as they say), and so run away with it, even after we had freely made Him Lord of it, as we thought: and this is the case in all other things. This is an odd way of seeking the love of God—to desire to possess it entirely, and as it were in handfuls, and yet still to retain our old affections, and not endeavor to fulfil our good desires, nor wish to raise them from the earth, though we expect to enjoy many spiritual consolations at the same time. But these two extremes cannot well agree, nor is there, in my opinion, any relation between them; and therefore, because we do not at once give ourselves up entirely to God, this treasure is not entirely given to us. May His Majesty, however, be pleased to bestow it upon us, were it only drop by drop, and though it should cost us all possible labors. God grants a very great mercy to that person whom he endows with grace and courage to resolve on procuring, with all his strength, this blessing; because, if he perseveres, our Lord will not deny it to him; and by degrees He will be giving him courage to gain this victory. I mention "courage" as necessary, because in the beginning the devil represents many difficulties, in order that we may not commence the good path effectually, as one who knows the injury he will receive, not only by losing that one soul, but many others also. If he who has begun to serve God endeavors, by the Divine assistance, to arrive at the height of perfection, I believe such an one will never go alone to heaven, but he will bring many others with him; and God will give these to him as to a valiant captain, that they may march under his guidance. Hence, as the devil will put many dangers and difficulties in the way, great courage is

necessary, as well as very many graces from God, in order not to turn back.

I will now speak of the manner in which those ought to commence who are determined to go in search of this blessing, and to succeed in this enterprise. I shall treat afterwards on what I have already begun to speak about, viz., "Mystical theology" (as I think it is called). The greatest trouble comes in the beginning, for those who give their whole substance to the Lord are the persons who suffer: but in the other degrees of prayer there is more enjoyment, though all three have their crosses in different ways. All those, however, who wish to follow Christ must walk along the way He went, unless they wish to be lost: and happy trials these are which even in this life are so superabundantly repaid! I will now make use of some comparisons, which yet I would be glad not to mention, because I am a woman; and I would wish also to relate simply what my superiors command me: but this language of the soul is so difficult to be expressed by ignorant persons like myself, that I must discover some method of explaining it. It may happen, that seldom I shall have the good fortune to give a proper comparison; and in this case your Reverence will be amused at seeing my stupidity.

It seems to me, that I have either read or heard the following comparison (though, as I have such a bad memory, I know not where or how I first met with it, but it will serve my purpose for the present). He then who commences (prayer) should imagine that he is beginning to make a garden, for the delight of his Lord, in some very unfruitful soil, full of weeds. His Majesty must be asked to pull up the bad plants, and put good ones in their place. But we will suppose this is already done, when a soul has not only determined, but is resolved to make use of mental prayer. And now, by God's help, we must endeavor, like good gardeners, to make these plants grow; and we should take care to water them, that so they may not wither, but bring forth flowers of such sweet fragrance as may please our Lord; and then he may take pleasure in often coming into this garden, and delighting Himself with our virtues. Let us see then in what way these flowers may be watered, that so

we may understand what we have to do, and what trouble it will cost us; whether it will be greater than the gain, and how long it will last. It seems to me, that these plants may be watered in four different ways:—1. By drawing water out of a well; and this cannot be done without much labor. 2. By using a wheel with buckets attached to it; and this can easily be turned by the hand: sometimes I have in this way drawn water myself, and I found it was less troublesome, and drew more than by the former method. 3. By letting some small stream run into the garden; and by this means it will be watered much better than by the preceding method, and the earth will have more moisture, and there will be no necessity to water the ground so often; the labor of the gardener also will be much less. 4. By a good shower of rain falling; for then our Lord himself waters the garden, without any labor on our part; and this is without comparison by far the best method of all I have mentioned. And now let us apply these four ways of watering, whereby this garden is to be kept in good order (because without water a garden will perish). This comparison, which suits my purpose, may serve to explain in some measure the four degrees of prayer, to which our Lord in His goodness has sometimes raised my soul. And may it please His Majesty, that I may speak correctly and in such a way as to profit one of those persons who have commanded me to write this account, and whom our Lord has advanced further in four months, than I was ever able to advance in seventeen years. But he disposed himself better than I did; and hence his garden was watered in these four ways, without any trouble on his part, though the last of these was given to him only by drops; but he advances so rapidly, that, by the assistance of our Lord, he will very soon be engulfed in it: and I should be glad were he to laugh at me, in case he finds my method of expressing these things to be very foolish. We may say that those who begin to use mental prayer are the persons who draw the water out of the well; and that this work is very troublesome, as I have mentioned above. They grow weary in re-collecting their senses, which, as they were accustomed to wander about, are difficult to keep in order. These persons, therefore, should accustom themselves, not to

hear or to see anything which may distract them: they should observe their hours of prayer, love solitude, and consider alone by themselves their past life. And though the perfect and the imperfect ought often to dwell on these thoughts, yet, as I shall afterwards show, some require more, and others less time. At first they will feel some uneasiness, because they are not fully satisfied whether they have repented of their sins; and yet they do repent, because they are so determined to serve God in good earnest. They should endeavor also to meditate on the life of Christ, though the understanding may grow weary of this practice. At this point we may be able to arrive ourselves—I mean, together with the divine assistance; for, without this, we know we cannot have even a good thought. This is beginning to draw water out of the well, and God grant there may be some; at least, the fault will not be ours if there be none, provided we endeavor to draw it, and do all in our power to water those flowers. And God is so good, that when, for reasons best known to His Majesty (perhaps for our greater profit), He wishes this well to become dry, He still supports the flowers without water, provided we do our part like good gardeners, and He causes virtues to spring up. By water I mean “tears;” and if there be none, tenderness, and an inward feeling of devotion.

But what will he do who experiences nothing for a long time but dryness, disgust, and insipidity, and so little inclination to go and draw any more water? If he did not remember that he pleases the Lord of the garden, and does a service to Him; and if he were not careful not to lose the merit of all his service, and the hope also of gaining more by the great labor of often casting the bucket into the well, and of bringing it up without any water, then he would be inclined to give up everything. Oftentimes it will happen that he will not be able to move his arms, nor to have even a good thought: this working with the understanding, it is understood, means “drawing water from the well.” But now, as I was saying, what is the gardener to do in this case? He should rejoice and console himself, and esteem it a very great favor to work in the garden of so great a prince. And since He knows that thereby he gives Him pleasure (for his

object should be, not to please himself, but God), let him praise our Lord, who treats with him so confidently, because He sees him so careful to do what He commands him, without receiving any recompense; and let him assist our Lord in carrying His cross, and remember that He lived all His life upon it. He should not desire to have his kingdom here in this world, nor ever once give up his prayer; but rather let him resolve, though this dryness should last all his life, never to allow Christ to fall with His cross. The time will come when he will be repaid altogether; he need not fear lest his labor should be lost, for he serves a good Master, who beholds all that he does. He should not make any account of bad thoughts, but consider how the devil represented them to St. Jerome in the desert. These labors have their value; and I assert, as one who has endured them for many years, that when I drew only a drop of water from this blessed well, I thought that God conferred a favor upon me. I know these troubles are very great; and it seems to me, more courage is necessary to support *them* than many other troubles in the world: but I have clearly seen, that even in this life, God does not leave such souls without bestowing on them great rewards; for it is most certain, that when I have passed one hour only in the enjoyment of our Lord here below, I have afterwards esteemed all my afflictions well rewarded, which I endured all the time I made use of prayer. I believe that our Lord is desirous often to give, in the beginning, these afflictions, and many other such temptations which occur, in order to try His lovers, and to discover if they can drink His chalice, and help Him to carry His cross, before He will commit such valuable treasures to them. And I think that, for our greater good, His Majesty wishes to carry us along this way, that so we may understand how little we are worth; because the favors he afterwards bestows are so excellent, that He wishes we should first know our misery by experience before He bestows them, lest what happened to Lucifer might befall us.

But what, oh my Lord! art Thou doing? Would it not be better, for the good of that soul which Thou knowest is already thine, and which puts herself into Thy hands, to

follow Thee wheresoever Thou goest, were it even to the death of the cross, and to resolve to help Thee to carry it, and never to leave Thee alone with it? They who see themselves possessed with such resolutions need not fear; for spiritual persons, who are raised to such a high degree of perfection as to despise all the pleasures of the world, and to wish to be alone with God, have no reason to be afflicted. The rest is already accomplished; praise His Majesty for it, and confide in His goodness, for He never was wanting to His friends. Consider not why He gives to one sensible devotion in a few days, and does not grant it to another for many years. Let us believe that all this is done for our greater good; and let His Majesty guide us where He pleases, for now we are no longer our own, but His. Great is the favor He bestows upon us in permitting us to dig in His garden, and in allowing us to be so near the Lord thereof; for it is certain that He is with us, whether He be pleased that these plants and flowers grow or not grow, by giving water to some and none to others, what does that matter? Do, O Lord, as thou pleasest, only let me not offend Thee, nor let my virtues be lost if Thou hast given me any. I wish to suffer, O Lord, since Thou didst suffer. May Thy will be accomplished in me in every way, and Thy Majesty be pleased that a treasure of such high value as Thy love, may never be given to those who only wish to serve Thee for the pleasures thereof.

It is necessary to remark (and I speak of this fact, because I know the truth of it by experience), that a soul which begins to walk in this way of mental prayer, with a firm determination not to make much account whether she receive many consolations or none at all,—because our Lord gives these consolations and tenderness of devotion, or He does not,—such a soul has already passed over the greater part of the road, and she need have no fear of going back again, whatever obstacles she may meet with, for the building is placed on a solid foundation. Hence the love of God consists, not in having the gift of tears, nor in receiving consolations and tenderness of devotion (which we may, however, desire and take comfort in); but in serving Him with justice, fortitude, and humility; otherwise, it seems to me, we should

be receiving everything, and giving nothing ourselves. And as for weak, insignificant, and cowardly women like myself, methinks it good and proper our Lord should lead us on with consolations,—such as I now receive from Him,—in order that we may the better endure those afflictions which His Majesty is pleased to send us. But as regards true servants of God, men of solid virtue, learned, and sensible, that such should be disturbed at not receiving from God tenderness of devotion, gives me sorrow. They should certainly receive these delights when God grants them, and esteem them very highly, because then His Majesty sees they are good for them; but when they have them not, they should not be troubled, knowing that as His Majesty does not give them, they are not necessary for them; they should be masters of themselves in everything; and believe this is a defect, for I have tried and seen it myself, and an imperfection, not to walk on with liberty of spirit, and to be cowardly in attacking difficulties.

I say not this so much for those who are beginners (though I place much stress on it, because it is very important they should begin with this liberty and determination), but for others also; for there are many who have begun, and yet do not advance; and I think it is, in a great measure, owing to their not having embraced the cross from the beginning. Such persons will fall into affliction, thinking that they do nothing; and because the understanding does not work, they are in trouble, though, perhaps, then it is that the will is nourished and strengthened without their perceiving it. We should recollect that our Lord does not look at these things, for though they may seem to us to be faults, yet they are not so in reality. His Majesty already knows our misery and base nature, much better than we do ourselves, and how these souls desire always to be thinking of Him and loving Him. This is that “determination” which He desires from us; but the other is an affliction which we bring on ourselves, for it serves only to disturb the soul; and if before she were unable to advance during one hour, now she will not perhaps advance in four hours. And many times (for I have great experience in this matter, and know it to be true, because I have care-

fully considered the subject, and spoken about it afterwards with spiritual persons)—this arises from corporal indisposition; for as we are so miserable, this poor confined soul of ours participates in the miseries of the body. Even the change of the weather and seasons, and our own humors are often the cause, why (without any fault of ours) we cannot do as we wish, and hence we suffer in every way. And when we try to force ourselves at this particular time, the evil becomes worse and lasts the longer. Judgment is necessary in order to know when the evil proceeds from this cause, and the poor soul must not be oppressed; we should also be aware that we are sick, and the hour of prayer should be changed, and this very often for several days. This banishment we must endure as well as we can, for it is misery enough for a soul which loves God to see that she lives in this misery, and that she is unable to do what she desires on account of the infirmities of the body in which she lodges. I said this is to be done with discretion, because sometimes the devil will be the cause of these things, and therefore it is good not always to omit the usual time of prayer whenever there may be great disturbance and distraction in the understanding, nor yet always to be tormenting the soul to make her do what she is not able. There are also other exterior works of charity which may be used; and though sometimes the soul may not be able to attend to these, yet she must accommodate herself, for the love of God, to the weakness of the body (because at other times the body serves the soul); and she may use as recreations holy conversations, or walk out into the fields, just as her confessor shall advise. Experience is an excellent schoolmaster in everything, for it makes one understand what suits us; and in all things God is served, for His yoke is sweet. It is very important the soul should not be dragged along the ground, as it were, but that she should be led along with mildness and sweetness, that so she may advance the more. Hence I again advise every one (and though I repeat this advice often, it will do no harm, for it is very important)—not to be depressed or afflicted either on account of drynesses or troubles, or distracting thoughts. If we wish to obtain liberty of spirit, we should not be always going about in trouble; but we should begin at once not to be

frightened at the cross, and then we shall see how our Lord will help us to bear it, with what pleasure we shall proceed, and what profit we shall derive from everything. We already see that if there be no water in the well, we cannot of ourselves put any into it. The truth is, we must not be negligent in drawing the water when there is any in, because by this means our Lord wishes to multiply our virtues.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SAINT CONTINUES HER DISCOURSE ON THE FIRST DEGREE OF PRAYER.

THAT which I intended to be understood in the last chapter—(though yet I spoke at some length on other points, because I considered it necessary to do so) was, how much we could acquire ourselves, and how in this first part of our devotion we may in some degree help ourselves; because by thinking and pondering on what our Lord suffered for us, we are moved to compassion, and the sorrow and tears which spring therefrom are very sweet. To think also of the eternal glory we hope for, and of the love our Lord bore us, and of His resurrection,—this excites joy within us, which is neither wholly spiritual nor sensual, but it is a virtuous kind of joy, and our sorrow is very meritorious. Of this nature are all those things which cause devotion, acquired in part by the understanding, though there be no merit or gain therein unless God give it. But it will be very proper for a soul which God has not raised to this state, not to endeavor to aspire any higher; and let this point be well remembered, for otherwise it may cause her ruin. In this degree she may perform several good actions, by resolving to do many things for God, and by awakening her love of Him, and other such actions, which help her to increase in virtue, according to the rules given in a book called, “The Art of serving God:” this is a very good book, and very proper for those who are in this state, because the understanding acts. She may also represent herself as in the presence of Christ, and to accustom herself to be greatly enamored with His

sacred Humanity, and to be always carrying Him along with her, and speaking to Him: she may likewise beg His assistance in her necessities, and even complain to Him of her afflictions, and rejoice with Him in her consolations, but yet so as not to forget Him on their account. All this may be done without making use of any set form of prayer, but only words conformable with her desires and necessities. This is an excellent way of advancing in a very short time; and whoever will endeavor to keep himself in this holy company, and to make a good use of it, and also to conceive a true love for our Lord, to whom we owe so much, such a one I consider as having already advanced. For this purpose, we must not in any way be troubled that we have no sensible devotion, as I have mentioned already, but rather we should give thanks to our Lord for making us desirous of pleasing Him, however weak our works may be. This method of carrying Christ with us in all the four degrees is very useful: it is a most secure means of advancing in the first degree, and of quickly arriving at the second degree of prayer; and of being free, in the two last, from those dangers which the devil may place in our way.

I have now mentioned what we can do: if any one should desire to pass from this state, and should raise his mind to the hope of feeling certain consolations which God does not grant him, this, in my opinion, would be to lose both the one and the other; for as these consolations are supernatural, when the understanding is lost, the soul then remains desolate and in great dryness. And since the whole building is grounded on humility, the nearer we approach to God, the more shall we advance in this virtue; and if we do not, all is lost. It seems to me a kind of pride when we desire to advance higher, since God bestows too much honor upon us (considering who we are)—to allow us to be so near Him.

But it must not be understood as if I spoke against raising up our thoughts to the consideration of heavenly things, or of God and His wisdom, and the wonders which are above. And though I never did this myself, for (as I have said) I have no ability for it; and I knew I was so wicked, that God conferred a favor on me in enabling me to think even of earthly things, that so I might understand this truth (and

this too was great boldness on my part, and how much more would it be to consider heavenly things); yet, other persons may profit thereby, especially if they have learning and knowledge, which, in my opinion, are a great treasure, if accompanied with humility, for the exercise of prayer. Not long ago I witnessed the truth of these words in some learned men, who began a short time since, and now they have made very great progress; and this makes me feel an earnest desire that all such may become spiritual men, as I shall declare afterwards.

What I have been saying about not raising ourselves higher than God wishes to raise us, is a spiritual mode of speaking: he who has not experience therein will understand me; but if he cannot comprehend what I say, I know not how to express it. In "Mystical theology,"* on which I began to speak, the understanding ceases to work, because God suspends it, as I shall declare more at length further on, if I be able, and God give me His grace. But to presume, or even to think of suspending it ourselves, this is what I am saying we must not do; neither must we omit working therewith, because we should then become cold and stupid, and not obtain what we desire; but when our Lord stops and suspends it, He supplies it with matter to occupy itself, and ravish it with astonishment, so that without any reasoning, it then understands more during the short space of a "Credo," than we ourselves could understand, with all possible study, during many years. But to exercise the powers of the mind, and at the same time to think of making them inactive, is foolishness. And I repeat it, though it may not be understood, that this is no great act of humility; for though it be not a fault, yet it is trouble thrown away, for which there will be a punishment, and the soul finds herself possessed with a certain slight disgust; just as when a person is about to take a leap, and is held back by others, he seems to have employed all his strength, and yet finds himself unable to accomplish what he had desired to do. And so, whoever will consider the matter, will find, by the slender gain he has made, some little want of humility, of

* On this subject see the Preface.

which I was speaking, because this virtue has the excellent property, viz., that there is no action, if it be accompanied with humility, which will ever leave the soul in disgust. I think what I have said has been understood, though perhaps only by myself: may our Lord open the eyes of those who read it; for however small may be their experience, they will soon understand what I have been speaking about.

For several years I continued to read many things, and yet I understood none of them; and there was also a long time during which, though God gave me ability to understand, I was not able to express myself so as to be understood; and this cost me no little labor: but when His Majesty wishes, He teaches us everything in a moment, and this, too, in such a way as perfectly to astonish me. One thing I can say with truth, that though I spoke with many spiritual persons, who wished to make me understand what our Lord imparted to me, in order that I might be able to declare it to others; yet it is certain my dulness was so great, that their discourse was no use to me. And perhaps our Lord, as His Majesty was always my master (and may He be blessed forever, since it is confusion enough to be able to say this with truth), was pleased I should have no one to thank but Himself; and without my desiring or wishing it (for in this point I was in no way curious, because it might have been a virtue to be so; but I was curious in other vanities), He gave me to understand it in a moment, that so I might be able to declare it to others; and this, too, in such a manner, that men were amazed thereat; and I myself was more than my confessors, because I knew my dulness better than they did. It is not long since this happened; and so I do not endeavor to know those things which our Lord has not taught me, only so far as they relate to my conscience.

I again repeat, that it is very important not to elevate our spirit, unless our Lord please to do it, and this is very soon understood. For women, especially, it is more dangerous, as the devil may bring some illusion upon them. But still I consider it certain, our Lord will not permit the devil to do *him* any harm who shall endeavor to approach His Majesty with humility; rather will he derive more profit and advantage from that very thing, by means of which the devil

thought of ruining him. I have thus entered into some long details, because the road of beginners is more beaten, and because the admonitions I have given are very important. I acknowledge, however, that others have written better than myself on the subject; and it is with great shame and confusion I have written, though not with so much as I ought to have. May our Lord be praised by all men, since He permits so miserable a creature as I am to speak of things relating to Him, and these so high.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHE CONTINUES THE FIRST DEGREE OF PRAYER, AND GIVES ADVICE AGAINST CERTAIN TEMPTATIONS, WHICH ARE SOMETIMES BROUGHT ON BY THE DEVIL.

I THINK it proper to speak on certain temptations, which I have noticed occur in the beginning, and which I have also experienced myself: I will give some advice respecting them, which I consider necessary. A beginner, then, should endeavor to go on with cheerfulness and liberty, for some persons seem to think their devotion will vanish, if they should take any little recreation. It is certainly proper to have a fear of one's self, that so we may entirely distrust ourselves in not putting ourselves in the occasions in which we are accustomed to offend God; and this distrust will be very necessary until we become perfectly confirmed in virtue. Few there are who are so confirmed, that they can safely trust themselves in occasions which are conformable to their natural inclinations; indeed, as long as we live in this world, it is well to know our miserable nature, were it only for the sake of humility. But there are many occasions when it is allowed (as I have mentioned) to take recreation, in order that we may return to prayer with greater strength; but in all things discretion is necessary, and likewise great confidence in God; for it is not proper to be diminishing our desires, but we must trust in Him. And if we use our utmost exertions, we may by little and little, though not immediately, arrive at the same perfection the saints did, by the Divine

assistance. And if these had never resolved to aspire thereto, and had not endeavored by degrees to execute their resolves, they would never have reached so high a state. His Majesty loves, and is a friend of courageous souls, provided they proceed with humility, and have no confidence in themselves. I have not seen any one of such souls remain behind on the road; and, on the other hand, I have never seen any cowardly soul (though provided with the safeguard of humility)—who has advanced as much in many years, as those others have in a very few years. I am amazed when I consider how much is done in this way, by animating ourselves to do great things; and though the soul may not have sufficient strength to perform them immediately, yet she takes a flight, and mounts high, though, like a bird not yet well feathered, she grows tired and reposes herself.

Formerly I often considered what St. Paul says: "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." As for myself, I knew well I could do nothing. I also gained great profit from the words of St. Augustine: "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt." I often thought that St. Peter lost nothing by throwing himself into the sea, though afterwards he was afraid. These first resolutions are of great importance, though in this first degree it is necessary that we should proceed with discretion, and do nothing without the advice of a director. But we must take care that He be one who will not teach us to go along like toads, nor to hunt after lizards; humility must ever precede, that so we may understand this strength does not come from ourselves. But we should first understand what kind of humility this must be; for I think the devil does those who practice prayer much harm, and prevents them from advancing, by causing them not to understand what humility properly is; and by endeavoring to make them think it is a species of pride to have heroic desires, and to wish for martyrdom, and to be anxious to imitate the saints. He immediately tells us, or makes us suppose, that the actions of the saints are only to be admired, not imitated, by us sinners. This I say likewise; only we must consider what in particular is to be admired, and what imitated. It would not be proper for a weak and sickly person to fast much, or use

severe penances, or go into a desert where he could neither sleep, nor get anything to eat, and so on. But we should be convinced, that we may, by the Divine assistance, strive to have a great contempt for the world; not to esteem honors, nor to be attached to riches. Our hearts are, however, so very narrow, that if we neglect a little the concerns of the body, in order to give more attention to the soul, it seems to us as if we should have no ground to stand upon. It seems a help to recollection not to be in want of necessary things; for cares of any kind interrupt prayer. I am grieved that we should have so little confidence in God, and so much self love as to be disturbed by any care. But the truth is, that when a soul has made but little progress, trifles will give as great trouble to some persons as matters of great importance do to others; and yet in our own minds we presume to think ourselves spiritual men. This way of acting seems to me to imply a desire of satisfying our soul and body in such a way as to take our ease in this world, and to hope to enjoy God in the next. And this will be the case, if we walk in justice and adhere to virtue; still it is but the pace of a hen, and never will it enable us to enjoy true liberty of spirit. This seems a good method of proceeding for those who are married, and who must act in conformity with their vocation; but for any other state to advance in that way, I on no account desire; nor will people ever make me believe it is a good way, for I have tried it myself, and I should always have continued in that road, if our Lord in His goodness had not taught me another shorter way.

It is true, I always had great desires, and I endeavored (as I have said) to practice prayer, though at the same time I wished to live at my ease. But I believe that if I could have found any one to encourage me to fly higher, I should have endeavored to execute those desires. But, through our sins, few there are who have over-much discretion for such cases; and this I think is one great reason why beginners do not advance more quickly on towards perfection. Our Lord never fails on His part: it is *we ourselves* who are faulty and miserable.

Persons may also imitate saints, in loving solitude and keeping silence, and practicing many other virtues that will

not destroy these our miserable bodies, which with so much care we desire to preserve, even at the risk of injuring the soul. The devil, too, helps us a great deal to make us unable to do these things; for when he sees we have some little fear, he desires no more than to persuade us that everything will be apt to kill us, or at least to deprive us of our health; and if we should have the gift of tears, he will try to make us fear we shall lose our sight. I have passed through these temptations, and therefore know them; and I know also, that we cannot desire a better kind of life or health than to lose them both in such a cause. Being so infirm myself, I was always tied up, and unable to do anything, till I resolved to make no account at all of my health, or to care for my body: even now I can do but little. But as soon as our Lord was pleased I should discover this trick of the devil, I told him, whenever he represented to me the danger of losing my health, that "my death would be of little consequence;" if he represented to me the necessity of rest, I told him "thas it was not ease which I now wanted, but the cross:" and so I acted in other cases. Though I am certainly very infirm, yet I saw clearly that in many things it was either a temptation of the devil, or my own laziness. But as I am not so nice and delicate as formerly, I now enjoy much better health. It is therefore of great importance, that those who begin to practice mental prayer be not disturbed or terrified by their thoughts: let them believe me in this point, for I have some experience therein; and perhaps it may be of some use to mention these my faults, that so others may take warning by me.

There is another very common temptation, which is this: to desire that all may become very spiritual, as soon as we ourselves begin to taste the calm and advantages which come from prayer. To desire this object is not bad; but to endeavor to effect it might prove hurtful, unless great discretion be used, and also some dissimulation, in such a way as not to let it appear that we are *teaching*. Whoever wishes to do some good in this respect, must have some very solid virtues, so as not to give any temptation to others. This happened to me, and therefore I understand it; for when (as I have mentioned) I was endeavoring to make others

practice prayer, and when, on the one hand, they heard me speak on sublime subjects, and of the great benefits which come from prayer—and when, on the other hand, they perceived how few virtues I possessed, I led them into temptation and disorder. I could not be surprised at this, and they themselves told me as much afterwards, for they knew not how these two could be reconciled with each other: and it caused them not to think *that* to be evil which indeed was so, because they saw me do it sometimes, when they had a good opinion of me. And this the devil effects, who it seems takes advantage of the virtues we possess, in order to authorize, as far as possible, the evil which he strives to accomplish. And however little that may be, when it is committed in a community, it gains much thereby; and how much more when the evil which I did was very great! And thus in many years, there were only three persons who profited by what I said to them. And when afterwards our Lord had bestowed upon me more solid virtue, many profited by me in two or three years, as I shall afterwards mention. But besides this, there is another great inconvenience, viz., when the soul makes no progress; because the chief thing we ought to mind at first, is to take care of our soul alone, and to consider as if there were no one in the world besides God and herself: this is a very important point.

There is also another temptation (and all such temptations come with a zeal for virtue, and it is necessary to understand them, and to use caution), arising from the trouble which men feel for the sins and defects that they observe in others. The devil endeavors to persuade us, that this grief is entertained by us only because we desire they should not offend God, and that we are troubled because His honor is insulted. Then we immediately desire to remedy this evil, and we thus become so restless that it hinders prayer, but the greatest misfortune is, that we think this to be virtue, perfection, and great zeal for God's glory. I speak not of that affliction which public sins cause, when a community is in the habit of committing them, nor of other calamities of the Church, such as heresies, whereby we see so many souls are lost; for this is a very good affliction, and, being good, it does not disturb the soul. But the secure way for a soul

which desires to practice prayer, will be to forget all persons and all things, to keep an account with herself, and to please God. It is very proper to do this; for if I should relate all the errors I have seen committed on account of the confidence men have put in their good intentions, I should never make an end. Let us, then, always endeavor to consider the virtues and good qualities which we perceive in others, and to conceal their defects by the consideration of our own great sins. This is a kind of work, which, though we cannot perform with perfection in a short time, yet we may gain great virtue thereby; and this consists in esteeming all others better than ourselves. This we begin to acquire by the grace of God, of which we have need in everything; and when this is wanting, all our endeavors are useless: we must therefore pray for this virtue, and if we use all diligence, God will not be wanting to any one. Let those, also, who discourse much with the understanding, consider well this advice, for they are able to draw many thoughts and ideas from one subject. But as for those who are unable, like myself, to work with this faculty, there is no necessity to give them advice, but only to have patience till our Lord gives them matter, by which they may occupy themselves, and light also; since they can do so little by themselves, that their understanding hinders more than it helps them.

But to return to those who discourse with the understanding: these I would advise not to spend all their time in this exercise; for though it be very meritorious, yet as prayer is so sweet, they think there will be no Sunday, nor any season wherein they will not be obliged to labor, and therefore they immediately suppose all that time is lost; whereas I think that loss is great gain. But let them (as I have said) represent themselves to be in the presence of Christ; and, without tiring the understanding, let them speak and regale themselves with Him, and not be fatiguing themselves in composing discourses, but only present their necessities, and acknowledge themselves unworthy to be allowed to appear in His presence. Some of these considerations may be used at one time, and some at another, that so the soul may not grow tired of always feeding on the same food: they are also very sweet and very profitable, if once we accustom ourselves to

feed on them, for they bring with them great support for giving life to the soul, as well as much profit.

But I will explain my meaning a little more, because these points connected with prayer are all difficult ; and if we have not a director, they are very hard to understand. And this is the reason why, though I wish to be short (for it would be sufficient merely to touch upon them, on account of the abilities of him who commanded me to write these particulars on prayer), yet my dulness is not able to declare, nor explain in a few words, a subject which it is so important to explain well. And because I suffered so much myself, I have compassion on those who begin to practice prayer by using only books ; for there is a wonderful difference between what we draw from them and what we learn afterwards by experience. But to return now to what I was saying. Let us begin by considering some part of our Saviour's passion ; as, for example, His being bound to the pillar. Here let the understanding search out the causes which produced those immense sorrows and pains which His Majesty endured in that affliction, and so on with regard to other points ; and if the understanding know how to meditate, or the person be learned, he may draw many lessons from such a subject. This is a method of prayer in which every one may both begin, and proceed, and make an end ; and it will be a very excellent and secure way, till our Lord shall be pleased to raise them to other supernatural things. I say "every one," though there may be many souls who will gain more profit by other meditations, than from the Sacred Passion ; for, as there are many mansions in heaven, so also there are many ways thither. Some persons profit by meditating on hell, and others by considering the joys of heaven, and others by thinking on death ; and others again, if they be tender-hearted, grieve too much, and disturb their mind, if they are always meditating on the Passion ; while they are more consoled, and profit more, by considering the power and greatness of God in His creatures, and the love He bears us, which is manifested to us in everything. This is an admirable way of proceeding, though at the same time we must not forget frequently to meditate on the life and Passion of Christ,

this being the source whence all our good is to come, and does still come.

A beginner should consider what he gains most by ; and for this purpose it is very necessary to have a director, if he can meet with an experienced man : if he be not experienced he may commit many errors, and guide a soul without understanding her, or allowing her to understand herself ; for as the beginner knows how very meritorious it is to subject one's self to a director, so he will not dare to depart from what he shall command. I have met with some persons who were afflicted and placed in difficulties, because he who was their guide and instructor had no experience, and I was very sorry for them : others also I have seen who knew not what to do with themselves ; for, not understanding spiritual matters, they afflict themselves both in body and soul, and prevent any advancement in prayer. A person once told me she had a director, who for eight years would not allow her to pass from the consideration of herself, and yet our Lord had already raised her to the prayer of Quiet, and thus she had great trouble. And though this consideration of one's self ought never to be omitted, nor should any soul given to prayer think herself so strong, as not often to stand in need of becoming a child. This must never be forgotten, and perhaps I shall speak more about it, because it is very important, and also because there is no degree of prayer so high in which it will not be necessary to return again to the first principles. And this knowledge of ourselves and of our sins, is the bread with which all our meals ought to be eaten in this road of prayer : for, however sumptuous these meals may be, they cannot nourish us without we have this bread. This, however, must be taken as it were by weight and measure ; for when a soul sees herself already humbled, and is deeply persuaded she is good for nothing, and blushes to behold herself in the presence of so great a King, and sees how little she repays Him for all she is indebted to Him, what necessity is there to spend so much time upon this point, without applying ourselves to other subjects which our Lord may place before us, and which it would not be proper for us to omit ? Our Lord knows better than we do what is proper for us to feed on.

Hence it is very important for the director to be skilful (I mean of good understanding) and also experienced; and if he be learned, in addition to this, it will be a very great advantage. Should, however, these three conditions not be found united together, the two first will prove more useful and important than the third, because we may easily consult learned men whenever we have occasion. But learned directors, if they be not experienced in prayer, can be of little use to beginners; yet, I do not say we should not confer with such men, for I myself would prefer to consult a learned confessor who did not practice prayer, than a man of prayer who was not learned, for the latter could not guide me in the truth. Learning is very necessary, since it instructs us who know but little, and gives us light; and when we come near the truths of Holy Scripture, then we do what we ought; but as for silly and foolish devotions, may our Lord deliver us from them.

I wish to explain myself more, for I think I say too many things at once: but this was always my fault, not to be understood (as I have before remarked), except at the expense of many words.

A nun, for example, begins to practice prayer; and if some simple man should direct her, he will capriciously give her to understand, that it is better to obey *him* than her superior: and this he does without any malice, but simply because he thinks he is in the right; and being a Religious, she thinks that what he says must be correct. If the person be married, he will tell her that it is better to apply herself to prayer, during the time when she ought to be engaged about her household work, even though she should displease her husband thereby; hence she knows not how to dispose of her time or of her business, that so all may go on in order, &c. As the director has not light himself, he cannot give it to others, though he may desire to do so; for this purpose learning may not seem so necessary; but my opinion is and always has been, that all Christians should endeavor to consult with learned men about their souls, and the oftener so much the better. Those who walk along the road of prayer have greater need than others to meet with such men, and the more spiritual they are, the better it will be for them. Let

not people deceive themselves by saying, "that learned men not accustomed to prayer are not fit directors for those who practice it." I have had occasion to consult many, and for the last few years more than usual, because I had greater need of them. I have always been very friendly with learned men; for though some of them have no experience, yet they do not dislike spiritual persons, nor are they ignorant of spiritual matters, because in the Holy Scriptures, which they study, they always find these matters are not without some truth. I am convinced, that a person given to prayer, if she take the advice of learned directors, will never be deceived by the illusions of the devil, unless she wish to deceive herself. I believe the devil is exceedingly afraid of learning, provided it be accompanied with humility and other virtues, for he knows he will be discovered and will suffer loss.

I have said thus much, because some think that learned men are not fit for persons given to prayer, unless they also be spiritual men. I have already said that it is necessary to have a spiritual director: and if he be not learned, great inconvenience may arise. And yet it will help us much to treat with learned men, provided they be virtuous; for though they may not be spiritual, they will benefit us, and God will give them to understand what to teach us; He will even make them spiritual, that so they may advance us in virtue. I do not mention this without having some experience of it, for I have met with more than two such directors. I say, therefore, that if a person give herself up entirely to the will of one single confessor, she will commit a great error, unless she endeavor to find one who is learned also: and especially if the individual be a man belonging to some Religious Order, because he must be subject to his superior, who perhaps might want all the three qualities mentioned above; this would be no little cross to him; and, besides, he might be submitting his understanding to the will of one who had not a good understanding himself. I, at least, could never prevail on myself to do this, neither did I think it proper.

But if the person should be a secular, let him beg of God that he may choose a man to whom he will subject himself, and let him not lose this virtuous liberty: he might even

remain for a time without any director till he find a fit one, for our Lord will certainly give him such a one if he become deeply grounded in humility, and has a desire to make a proper choice. I myself admire such a director exceedingly; and both men and women, who are not learned, should always give great thanks to God, that there are some who with such pains have found out the truth, of which we, being unlearned, are ignorant. I am often astonished in considering with what trouble learned men, especially those in a Religious Order, have acquired that which is so advantageous to me, and which I learn without any trouble, except that of asking them; and can any one be unwilling to benefit himself by it? God forbid! I see these persons subject themselves to the mortifications of the religious life, which are great; to penances, to poor diet, to obedience, to want of sleep: I see that every thing is a mortification, every thing a cross, and sometimes the thought thereof throws me into some confusion; and I think what a great evil it would be for any one to lose such a benefit by his own fault. And there may be some amongst ourselves who are free from these austerities (or at least, if we feed upon them, we have them well dressed, as the expression is), and we live at our ease; but because we give a little more time to prayer, we may fancy that we excel those who are accustomed to such great austerities. Blessed be Thou, O Lord! who hast made me so useless and incapable of good! yet I praise Thee most sincerely, because thou hast raised up so many to excite us to virtue. We should, therefore, continually offer up our prayers for those who give us light; for what should we do without them, amidst such terrible tempests as the Church is now in? If some men have been wicked, the good will shine the brighter: may our Lord hold them by His hand and help them, that so they may help us. Amen.

I have digressed from what I first intended to say, but all is useful for beginners who commence this sublime way of prayer in such manner, that they may see themselves placed in the true road of salvation. To return then to what I was saying, about thinking of Christ bound to the pillar: it is good to discourse a while, and meditate on the pains He endured there, and *why* He endured them, and *who* it is that

endured them, and also to consider the love wherewith He bore them. But we should not weary ourselves with seeking out these reasons, but only dwell upon them with a calm understanding. If possible, we should employ ourselves in considering who looks upon us; and we should accompany Him, and pray to Him, and humble ourselves before Him, and regale ourselves with Him, remembering that our Lord deserved not to be there. Whenever we are able to do this, though it should be at the very commencement of our prayer, we shall find great benefit from it; indeed, many benefits are gained by this kind of prayer,—at least my soul found it so. I know not if what I have said be correct; your Reverence will consider this: but may our Lord be pleased, that I may not fail in always pleasing Him. Amen.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SAINT BEGINS TO EXPLAIN THE SECOND DEGREE OF PRAYER.

HAVING already mentioned with what labor this garden is to be watered, and what strength is required to draw the water from the well, I will now explain the second way of drawing up the water; for the Master of the garden wishes that by means of the wheel and buckets the gardener may be able to draw more water with less trouble, and may also be enabled to take a little rest, without being continually obliged to be at work. Now this method, when applied to prayer, which is called the “Prayer of Quiet,” is what I wish to speak upon.

Here the soul begins to be recollected and to touch upon the supernatural, for it is impossible she can acquire this gift by her own power. It is true, that sometimes she may grow weary in turning round the wheel, working with the understanding, and filling the buckets; but as the water is higher in this second way, she has less labor than she had in drawing the water out of the well; I say the water is nearer to her, because grace is given to her, to know herself more clearly. This is done by collecting within herself all

her faculties,* that so she may enjoy the divine sweetness with more pleasure. These, however, do not remain dormant, nor are they lost; the will alone is occupied in such a way that she is taken captive without knowing how, and only gives her consent that God may hold her in captivity, as one who knows well what it is to be a captive of Him whom she loves. O Jesus, my Lord! how powerful is your love, since it holds our love so fast bound as not to give us, for an instant, the liberty of loving any person or thing but You!

The other two faculties assist the will, that so she may be made capable of enjoying so great a good, although sometimes it happens that even when united with the will they are a great hinderance to it; but, in this case, the will must not disturb herself, but remain in her quiet and pleasure; for if the soul be anxious to re-collect all her faculties, both she and they will lose the good they might otherwise gain. They are like pigeons, which, not being content with the food the owner gives them from the pigeon-house, without their laboring for it, go and seek some elsewhere, but finding it not good, they soon return; and thus they come and go to see if the will might give them any part of that which it enjoys: and if our Lord should be pleased to cast them some food, they stay; if not, they go away again to seek for it. It is thus that these faculties act with regard to the will, thinking they are of some use to it; but sometimes the memory and imagination injure it, by wishing to represent to it the happiness it enjoys: let the will then act towards them in the way I shall mention afterwards.

Whatever happens in the Prayer of Quiet is accompanied with very great consolations, and gives so little trouble, that however long it may last it never tires the soul, because the understanding only acts at intervals, though it draws much more water than it drew from the well. The tears which God gives it then are tears of joy, which, though we feel, we procure not. This water, the source of great blessings and favors which our Lord gives us therein, makes our virtues increase incomparably more than in the first degree of prayer, because the soul now begins to rise out of her misery, and

* The will, memory, and understanding.

to have some small glimpse of the joys of eternal glory ; and this, I think, makes her increase the more in virtue, because she approaches nearer to that true power whence all virtues come, that is, God. Then His Majesty begins to communicate Himself to this soul, and He wishes her to feel *how* he communicates Himself. When she has arrived at this point, she immediately begins to lose all appetite for the things of this world, and to despise them, because she sees clearly that even one moment of these pleasures cannot be purchased here below ; and that no riches, nor dominions, nor honors, nor delights are capable of giving such pleasures, even for one instant, because the pleasures are *true*, and we feel that they satisfy us. With regard to the pleasures of the world, it seems even a wonder to me that we can tell in what their enjoyment consists, because “ Yes and No ” are never wanting : but in the other pleasures, everything is “ Yes ” all the time : “ No ” comes in afterwards ; for then she sees that the matter has come to an end, and that she cannot recover it again, nor does she know *how*. And though she should almost kill herself with doing penance and praying, and using all other means, yet all would be of little use unless our Lord was pleased to grant the favor. But God, for the sake of His greatness, is pleased this soul should now understand, that His Majesty being so very near her, there is no need of sending any messengers to her, but only for she herself to speak with Him, though not by word of mouth, because being so near her, He understands her even by the very movement of her lips.

It may appear unnecessary for me to speak in this manner, since we know well that our Lord always hears us, and is always with us : there can be no doubt of this truth. But our Lord and Emperor wishes we should here understand that He knows us, and that we should feel the effects of His presence ; that He particularly wishes to begin to work in our soul by giving her a great interior and exterior satisfaction, and by showing her the difference there is (as I have declared) between those heavenly delights and the pleasures of the world ; for the former seem to fill up the void which our sins have made in the soul. And this satisfaction resides in the most intimate part of the soul, and she knows

not whence nor how it has come ; and often she knows not what to do, nor what to desire, nor what to ask for. Therein she seems to find all good things united together, though she knows not what she has found, nor do I know how to make her state understood ; for many things learning would be necessary, in order to make those who are ignorant understand, that there are general helps and particular helps ; and that by the latter our Lord wishes the soul to see Him almost as it were with her own eyes, and to see many other things also, which cannot be properly expressed by me. But as proper persons are to see what I write, and to examine if there be any errors in it, I do not feel so uneasy because it will go into the hands of those who will understand the matter, and who will blot out whatever has been incorrectly expressed ; and I know that through want of learning and piety I may easily be found fault with.

I wish, however, to explain myself, because a soul to whom God begins to show these favors, as soon as she applies herself to prayer, does not understand them, nor does she know what to do with herself. If God should conduct her along the path of fear, as He has conducted me, she will experience great affliction, unless she meet with some one who can understand her ; then her joy will be abundant to see herself well described, and she will know clearly that she is walking along the right road. It is also a great blessing to know what one ought to do in each of these degrees, that so we may go on with profit ; for I myself suffered much, and lost a great deal of time, because I knew not what to do. I have, therefore, great compassion for those souls who find themselves alone when they have arrived at this point ; for though I have read many spiritual books which treat on this subject, yet it is explained in a very obscure manner ; and hence, unless the soul be properly exercised in prayer, she will find it difficult to understand them, though they may explain the point at some length.

I am very desirous our Lord would grant me the favor to relate the effects which are produced in the soul by these things, when they begin to be supernatural, that so she may know when these effects come from the Spirit of God. When I say, " that she may know," I mean as far as we can under-

stand in this world, though we shall always do well to walk on with fear and circumspection; for though these effects come from God, yet sometimes the devil can transform himself into an angel of light; and if a soul be not well acquainted with prayer, she will not understand this stratagem; indeed, to understand it properly, she must have arrived at the highest degree of prayer.

The little time I have to spare gives me but little help, and therefore it is necessary for His Majesty Himself to assist me; for I must be engaged with the community, besides being occupied with many other things. I am also at present living in a house which has only just commenced, as I shall afterwards mention. I am writing, therefore, without having any repose, and only by little and little; but I wish I had more leisure; for when our Lord helps us by His grace to do a thing, it is always done better, and with more facility; for then it seems as if we had a pattern before our eyes, which we have only to follow. But when the Divine Spirit is not with us, then we no more understand this language than if it were gibberish (as the expression is), although we have spent many years in prayer. Hence it seems a very great advantage for me to be in prayer when I write; for then I see clearly it is not I who speak, nor does my understanding direct me, so that after I have written I could not tell *how* I wrote: this has happened several times.

Let us now return to our garden, and consider how these trees begin to bud and to flower, that afterwards they may give fruit; and how the pinks and other flowers bloom and diffuse a sweet smell. This comparison pleases me much; for often in my beginnings—I mean at the commencement of my life, as I shall mention afterwards (and may our Lord grant that *now* I may have begun to serve His Majesty),—it was a great delight for me to consider my soul as a garden, in which our Lord walked up and down. I besought Him to increase the odor of those little flowers of virtue, which seemed wishful to bud, that so they might contribute to His honor and glory; and that He would support them, since I desired nothing for myself, and would prune them as He pleased, for I already knew they would grow the bet-

ter afterwards. I said, I besought Him to "prune" them, because at certain periods the soul has no remembrance of this garden, but everything seems to be so withered, as if no water would come any more to refresh it, and as if there never had been any virtue at all in the soul. Thus she suffers much affliction, because our Lord wishes the poor gardener to think, that all the care is lost which he had employed in watering and taking care of his garden. Then, however, is the time truly to cut up by the root those small weeds which had hitherto remained in the soul, by making us understand that no diligence of ours will avail, if God take away from us the water of His grace, that so we may not esteem our nothingness—or, rather, our less than nothingness. Hereby great humility is gained, and the flowers bloom with fresh beauty. O Thou, my Lord and Sovereign Good!—(and I know not how to utter these words without tears, and without feeling great pleasure in my soul)—how desirous Thou art to be thus amongst us! And Thou art also in the Blessed Sacrament, which may most truly be believed, because Thou hast said so: and with great truth also we can make this comparison; for if no fault on our part prevent us, we can enjoy ourselves with Thee! And Thou art likewise pleased to be with us, since Thou hast said, "My delight is to be with the children of men." O my Lord, what mean these words? Whenever I hear them, they always give me great consolation; and so it was even when I was very wicked. Is it possible, O Lord! there should be any soul which, after having received such favors and blessings from Thee, and having understood it was Thy delight to be with her, should again offend Thee—after all these favors, and so many great proofs of the love Thou bearest her, as to leave no doubt it is so, since it is manifest by the effects? Yes! it is certain there is such a soul who has offended Thee, not once but often—and this is myself. I beseech Thy goodness, O Lord, that I may be the only soul who has been guilty of such base wickedness, and such excessive ingratitude, though even from this my wickedness, Thy infinite goodness has been able to draw some advantage; and the greater my misery was, the more has the greatness of Thy mercies shone forth. What strong reasons, then,

have I not to celebrate those mercies forever? I beseech Thee, O my Lord, that it may be so: and that I may sing Thy praises forever, since now Thou hast been pleased to show such very great favors to me, that those who see them are amazed; and often they carry me quite out of myself. Were I to be without Thee, O my Lord! I should be fit for nothing but to behold the flowers of this garden become withered in such a way, that this miserable body of mine would be again turned into a dunghill, as it was formerly. But in order that I may praise Thee the better, do not permit, O Lord, this soul to be lost, which Thou hast purchased with so many labors, and which Thou hast so often repurchased again and again, and hast saved from the teeth of the terrible dragon.

I trust your Reverence will pardon me for thus wandering from the subject; do not wonder at it, for it happens so according to the nature of the reflections the soul makes when I write: hence it is sometimes very difficult to forbear breaking out into praises of God, when, as I am writing, all that I owe Him are represented to me. And I believe this will not be displeasing to your Reverence; for it seems to me, that we may both chant one song, though in a different manner; for I owe much more to God than you do, because He has pardoned me more sins, as your Reverence knows well.

CHAPTER XV.

SHE CONTINUES THE SAME SUBJECT, AND GIVES SOME ADVICE HOW PERSONS ARE TO ACT IN THE PRAYER OF QUIET, ETC.

LET us now return to our subject. This quiet and recollection of the soul are easily perceived, by the peace and satisfaction they produce, together with a very great pleasure and calm, as well as the sweetest delight in the soul. And now it seems to her, as she has not arrived any farther, that already there is nothing for her to desire, and that she may willingly exclaim with St. Peter, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." She dare not stir, nor move, lest the good should depart from her: sometimes she would even desire not

to draw her breath. The poor soul understands not, that as by herself she is unable to do anything towards bringing this good to her ; so she has less power to keep it any longer than our Lord is pleased. I have already mentioned how in this quiet and recollection the powers of the soul are not wanting ; but she is so fully satisfied with God, that though while the prayer lasts the memory and the understanding are not exempt from distractions ; yet, as the will remains united with God, the soul does not lose her quiet and calm ; but rather, by little and little she recalls the other two powers, so as to make them recollected. And though the will be not wholly engulfed in God, yet she is so occupied, without knowing how, that, however diligent these two may be, they cannot deprive her of her contentment and joy ; but rather, she goes on helping herself without any trouble, in order that this little spark of God's love may not be extinguished in her.

I beseech His Majesty to grant me grace, that I may make this point well understood ; for there are many souls who arrive at this degree of prayer, and few who go beyond it, and I know not who is in fault : but of this I am sure, there is none on the part of God ; for since His Majesty does a soul the favor of bringing her to this degree, I cannot believe he would cease to bestow many more favors upon her, were it not through some fault of her own. It is very necessary for the soul who has arrived so far, to understand the great dignity she possesses, and the great favor our Lord has bestowed upon her, and what powerful reasons she now has no longer to belong to the earth ; because it seems that His goodness has already made her an inhabitant of heaven, if she lose it not through her own fault. Wretched will she be if she turn back ; for I believe she would descend very low, just as I was doing, if the mercy of our Lord had not brought me back again ; because for the most part such a misery is, in my opinion, to be attributed to grievous faults : nor is it possible to fall from so great a good, without great blindness to such an evil. I therefore beseech those souls, for the love of our Lord, on whom His Majesty has bestowed such favors as to enable them to attain this state, to know themselves ; to estimate such a favor as it deserves, and to resolve, with

humility and a holy presumption, not to return to the flesh-pots of Egypt. But if, through their weakness and wickedness, and their miserable and corrupt nature, they should fall again, as I did, let them always be representing to themselves the good they have lost: let them suspect themselves, and walk with fear,—for they have reason to do so. If they return not to prayer, they will go on from bad to worse; for this I call “a real fall,” when a soul abhors that very means by which she purchased so great a good; and it is to such souls I am speaking now. I say not that they will never offend God, or fall into sin, though it is but reasonable that those souls who have begun to receive these favors, should guard against falling as much as possible. But we are miserable creatures; and what I earnestly advise is, not to omit prayer, for thereby we shall know what we are doing, and we shall obtain true sorrow for having offended our Lord, and strength to rise again when we have fallen. Let us be convinced, that if the soul neglect prayer, she exposes herself, in my opinion, to great danger. I know not if I understand what I am saying, because I judge of others by myself.

This kind of prayer, then, is a spark of God’s true love, which our Lord begins to enkindle in the soul; and His desire is, that she should understand what is the nature of this love, and what kind of delight it brings with it. This quiet, and recollection, and little spark, if it come from the Spirit of God, and be not a pleasure either given by the devil or procured by ourselves, however small it may be, makes a great noise. And if the soul do not extinguish it by her own fault, this it is which begins to enkindle a large fire, which (as I shall mention in the proper place) sends forth from itself flames of the most burning love of God, which His Majesty is pleased perfect souls should enjoy, though he who has experience cannot but immediately understand, that it is a thing which cannot be acquired; but that as our nature is so desirous of pleasure, we wish to taste of everything. If, however, this quiet and recollection come from the devil, we soon grow very cold again; and however much we may desire to make the fire burn, in order to obtain this pleasure, it seems that we need only cast water on it to quench

it. This spark is a sign or pledge which God gives to that soul, to show her how He chooses her for great things, if she will only make herself fit to receive them ; this is an invaluable gift, much greater than I am able to express. Deeply am I grieved, because (as I was saying) I know many souls who have arrived so far : and yet so very few have passed further on, as they ought to do, that I am ashamed to acknowledge it. There may, however, be many, for God supports us for some purpose : but I only speak of those I have seen. I would earnestly advise such not to hide their talent, for it seems God chooses them, that they may do good to many other souls,—and especially in these times, when it is so necessary for His Majesty to have staunch and resolute friends to support the weak. And let all who find they have received this favor esteem themselves strong, if they know how to correspond with the Lord, which even in this world a sincere friendship requires ; and if not, let them fear lest they do themselves some harm ; and God grant the evil may come upon no one but themselves.

In this Prayer of Quiet, the soul has nothing more to do than to remain enjoying her sweetness without making any noise. I call it “noise,” if the understanding go about seeking many words and considerations, to give thanks for this benefit, and be collecting together her sins and imperfections, in order to discover she does not deserve this favor. All is in motion now : the understanding represents many things to us, and the memory is busy : and truly these powers of the soul give me at times some trouble ; and as I have a weak memory too, I cannot control them. At this time, then, the will should remain in repose, and wisely acknowledge that this is not the way to treat with God ; and that it is like throwing great logs of wood, without discretion, on a small spark, in order to extinguish it. Let her therefore acknowledge with humility, and say, “O Lord ! what can I do here ? What has this slave to do with the Lord of heaven and earth ?” Or she may use some other loving words, such as present themselves, being firmly convinced, however, that what she says be the truth. As regards the understanding, let the soul consider it in no other light than that of a miller, as it were ; and if she be desirous of giving it a part of what she

enjoys, or shall labor to make it recollected, she will not gain her object: for often we see that in this union and repose of the will, the understanding is still much out of order; and if the will cannot arrest it, it is much better to let it alone, rather than go after it. Let it remain in the enjoyment of this favor, shut up in itself, like a wise bee; for if none of the bees should go into the hive, but be all wandering about, very little honey would be made.

A soul will lose much, if she pay not attention to this point, especially if the understanding be subtle; for when once she begins to arrange her discourses, and to seek for reasons, she will think she has done something great, particularly if the discourses be eloquent. But the discourse which should be used in this prayer must be, clearly to see and acknowledge that there is no other reason why God should confer so great a favor on us than His own goodness; to consider that we are very near Him; to beg favors from His Majesty; to pray for the Church; for those who have recommended themselves to our prayers, and for the souls in purgatory: and this should be done, not by the noise of words, but by a feeling desire to be heard. The Prayer of Quiet comprehends a great deal, and more is obtained thereby than by many discourses of the understanding. Let the will, then, excite within herself some reasons (which will easily present themselves to her when she finds herself so much improved) capable of inflaming this love; and let her make certain acts of love with respect to what she would gladly do for One to whom she owes so much, without allowing (as I have mentioned) the understanding to make any noise, under the pretext of seeking for high and lofty thoughts. But a few little straws,—and even something less than straws, if it be possible,—presented with humility, will be much more to the purpose, and will be of greater help in enkindling the fire of divine love, than great logs of wood,—I mean, than learned discourses,—which, however beautiful they appear to us, might extinguish the fire in a few minutes. These may be good for learned men, who command me to write this book, because, by the mercy of God, all of them may attain this degree of prayer, and perhaps they might spend the time in considering some passages from Scripture.

But though their learning could not fail of being useful to them, both before and after prayer, yet, during the time it continues, there is, in my opinion, little necessity for their learning, unless they wish to cool the fervor of the will. The reason is, because the understanding, then seeing itself so near to Light itself, is so much enlightened, that even I (though so miserable a creature) seem to be another person. And thus it has happened to me, when in the Prayer of Quiet, though I understand hardly anything of what is said in Latin, and especially in the Psalter, yet I not only understand the verse in Spanish, but I pass further on, and delight myself in considering the meaning of the Spanish. I make an exception with regard to those who have to preach or to teach, for then it will be proper to make use of their learning, in assisting poor ignorant persons like myself; for charity is a great virtue, and so it is to help souls forward, provided that it be always done for God.

At the time when the soul is in possession of this quiet, let her rest with her true repose, and let learning be put aside; for the time will come when it will be of service, and will be so highly esteemed, that on no account would men have neglected knowledge, were it only for the opportunity it gives them of serving His Majesty, since for this object it is very useful. But believe me, that a little attention to acquire humility and an act of this virtue, are worth more before His infinite wisdom than all the learning in the world. Here we have no need of reasoning, but only to know with sincerity what we are, and to represent ourselves with simplicity before God, who desires that the soul should make herself as dull and ignorant as she is in reality in His sight, since His Majesty humbles Himself so far as to allow her to be near His own person, though we are such miserable creatures. The understanding is likewise moved to return thanks in words very well arranged; but the will, in the enjoyment of her calm, and not presuming, like the publican, to lift up her eyes to heaven, makes a better thanksgiving than perhaps the understanding would be able to do, by using all the powers of rhetoric. We should not, however, in this case entirely omit the use of mental prayer, nor even of vocal prayer, if we should sometimes wish to practice it, or

should find ourselves able to do so ; because if the quiet be great, we can hardly help speaking without considerable pain. In my opinion, we can know when this comes from the Spirit of God, or when we procure it ourselves at the commencement of that devotion which God gives us ; but when we wish (as I have said) to procure by ourselves this quiet of the will, no good effect is then produced ; it ends quickly, and leaves nothing but dryness behind. If it should come from the devil, a soul exercised in prayer will I think soon discover it ; for it leaves a certain restlessness and confers little humility, and makes us but ill prepared for receiving those effects which the Spirit of God produces ; it leaves no light in the understanding, nor firmness in speaking the truth.

But this will do little or no hurt to the soul, if she direct to God the sweetness and delight she then feels ; and if she also place all her thoughts and desires in Him (as I have already advised), the devil can gain nothing ; yea, God will so dispose matters, that he will lose much even by that very delight he causes in the soul ; for this very delight will help that soul, which thinks it comes from God, often to have recourse to prayer, with the desire of receiving more and more delight. But if the soul be humble and not curious, nor desirous of delights (even though they be spiritual), but be a lover of the cross, she will make little account of any pleasure the devil may cause in her ; this, however, she cannot do if it come from the Spirit of God, for then she will esteem it very highly. When the devil—who is lying and deceit himself—attempts such a thing, if he see a soul humble herself by means of this delight and pleasure which she receives (and indeed we ought to take great care to humble ourselves in all things relating to prayer and having delights), he will not often return and tempt us, when he perceives he loses, rather than gains thereby. For this and many other reasons I mentioned in the first degree of prayer (which answers to the first method of drawing water), how very important it is when the soul enters first upon prayer, to begin to disengage herself from all kind of pleasure, and to be determined only to help our Lord to carry His cross, like brave knights who are resolved to serve their king gratis, since they are already sure He will reward them ; and so we must

turn our eyes to that true and everlasting kingdom which we are endeavoring to possess.

It is very necessary to have these considerations always before our eyes, especially in the beginning, for afterwards we become quite convinced, that instead of endeavoring to remember how quickly everything ends, that all pleasures are nothing, and that worldly rest is not to be esteemed or desired, we rather find it necessary to forget such thoughts in order to live. This seems a very unworthy consideration, and so it is : for they who are more advanced would take it for an affront, and would even blush at themselves if they thought they had forsaken the pleasures of this life because they were one day to have an end ; for were they to last even forever, yet these souls would rejoice to leave them for God's sake ; the more perfect they were, the more they would rejoice ; yea, the longer these pleasures lasted, the more would they rejoice in leaving them. The love of God, which is great in these souls, operates these effects ; but for those who are commencing, this point is very important (and they must not consider of little value), to leave all pleasures for God ; for the benefits which are gained by this means are very great, and therefore do I insist upon this matter so much ; for those even who are most experienced in prayer it is necessary to attend to this point, for there are times in which God wishes to try them, nay, when He seems even to have forsaken them ; for, as I have before said, and I do not wish to have my words forgotten, in the life that we live the soul does not increase as the body does, though we say she does ; and this is true to a certain extent, for after a child has grown and become a man, he does not again grow less nor has he a little body : but with regard to the soul, our Lord wishes it to be otherwise, according to what I have seen in myself, though I know nothing with regard to others. This ought to humble us for our greater good, and in order that we may not grow negligent while we live in this exile, for he who stands the highest ought to fear the most, and trust himself the least. There are times, when even those whose will is so united with the Divine will, that they would rather suffer all kinds of torments, and a thousand deaths, than commit the least imperfection, are so violently attacked

by temptations and persecutions, that in order to avoid committing sin, and to keep themselves from offending God, it is necessary for them to make use of the first arms of prayer, and to consider again and again how all things come to an end, that there is a heaven and a hell, and so on with regard to other points of the like nature. But to return to what I was saying: in order to free one's self from the deceits of the devil, and from those false pleasures he makes us feel in prayer, it is very necessary to commence with a resolution not to desire these pleasures, but to walk in the way of the cross, since our Saviour himself has shown us the road which leads to perfection in these words—"Take up your cross and follow me." He is our pattern; and whoever follows His advice, merely with a view to please Him, need not fear anything; and by the profit which they see they have gained in themselves, they will easily discover the devil does not delude them; and though they should relapse, yet one proof will remain, that our Lord has been there, viz., that they will quickly rise again, and this is what I shall now declare.

When it comes from the Spirit of God, there will be no necessity to go in search of reasons for acquiring humility and confusion, because our Lord himself gives them in a manner very different from what we ourselves can procure by our mean considerations, all of which are nothing in comparison with that true humility, and with that light which our Lord here gives us; and these produce in us such a deep confusion that they annihilate us. The knowledge which God gives us, that we may understand we have no good of ourselves, is very easily perceived; and this the more, the greater the favors are. It also excites a great desire of advancing in prayer, and of not omitting this duty on account of any trouble which may happen to us. It produces a confidence that we shall be saved, united however with fear and humility. It immediately drives away all servile fear from the soul, and puts in its place a *filial* fear, which is much stronger. She now sees that she begins to have a love for God, which is far from being interested, and she desires opportunities for solitude, that so she may the better enjoy that good. In a word (not to weary myself too much), this is the beginning of all good things, a state in which the flowers

are almost on the point of blossoming ; and this the soul sees very clearly. Then she cannot but believe that God is with her, till she sees herself guilty of faults and imperfections ; then she fears everything, and it is proper she should, though there are souls to whom it is more useful to believe for certain that God is with them, than to have all the fears in the world, because if the soul of herself be loving and grateful, the remembrance of the favor which God conferred upon her is more efficacious in turning her to God than the representations of all the torments of hell ; at least, this happened to myself, though so wicked.

As for the signs of a good spirit, I will speak of them more in detail hereafter ; now I cannot do so, for it costs me a great deal of trouble to have them drawn out in a clear, legible form ; but I hope that, by the divine grace, I shall be able to say something to the purpose ; for, besides the experience whereby I have come to understand many things, I have learned something from some very learned men, and from very holy persons, to whom it is proper to give credit ; let not other souls then be so afflicted as I was, when they shall have arrived, through the goodness of our Lord, at this state.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SAINT SPEAKS ON THE THIRD DEGREE OF PRAYER.

I NOW wish to speak of the third water wherewith this garden is watered, for this is a running water of a river or spring, and it waters with much less labor the garden, though the distribution thereof causes some trouble. But our Lord will so help the gardener, that in some degree He will almost be the gardener Himself, and will do everything. It is a repose of all the powers, which, however, are not entirely lost, nor yet do they know how they work. The pleasure, sweetness, and delight are greater beyond comparison than in the former state ; and the soul is so engulfed in the water of grace, that she cannot go forward, nor does she know

how, nor is she willing to return back, because of the excessive glory she enjoys. It is as if a person were on the point of dying the death he desires, with a blest candle in his hands, for in this agony the pleasure he enjoys is more than can be expressed; and this seems to me to be nothing more than to die almost entirely to everything in the world, that so we may enjoy God alone. I know of no other words wherewith to express this delight, or to declare it; nor does the soul know at that time what to do, whether she should speak or be silent, laugh or weep. It is a glorious kind of frenzy, a celestial folly, whereby true wisdom is learned; and the soul cannot have a more delightful means of regaling herself. I think it is about five or six years ago since our Lord gave me this kind of prayer often and abundantly, and then I neither understood it nor could I express it; I had therefore resolved, when I came to treat on this degree, to say little or nothing. I saw very clearly however, that it was not an entire union of all the powers of the soul, but still that it was more than could be found in the former degrees; yet I must acknowledge, I could not determine, nor did I know in what this difference consisted. But I believe, that on account of the humility which your Reverence has shown, in wishing to be assisted by such great simplicity as mine, our Lord gave me to-day after communicating this prayer, yet without my being able to go forward; and He put these comparisons into my head, and taught me how to express them, and what the soul is to do in this case; and truly I was amazed thereat, for I understood the whole subject in a moment. Many times I was as it were out of myself, being inebriated with this love, and yet I could never understand how it was: I knew well, however, it was from God, but I could not comprehend how He worked therein; for in reality the powers of the mind are almost entirely united, but not so engulfed but that they still work: I have been extremely pleased at having now understood this prayer. May our Lord be blessed for having thus favored me.

These powers are then only capable of occupying themselves entirely on God; and it appears that none of them daring to move, we could not turn away from this object without using great violence to them; and I know not

whether with all our efforts we could even then do so. Many words are then spoken in praise of God, without any order, unless our Lord himself should arrange them, for here the understanding is of no use whatever. The soul would fain break forth into praises, but she cannot contain herself, and her condition is a pleasing kind of restlessness. Then the flowers begin to open and to scent the air; then the soul would be glad if all the world could see and understand her glory, so as to praise God; and if every one could assist her therein, that so she might give them part of her joy, not being able to enjoy so much herself. She seems to me to be like the person mentioned in the Gospel, who called her neighbors; or as if she felt the admirable spirit of the royal prophet David, when he played on his harp and sung the praises of God. I am very much devoted to this glorious King, and I wish that all men were so, especially we who are sinners.

O my God! in what state is a soul when she finds herself raised to this degree of prayer! She would wish to be changed into so many tongues, in order to praise Thee, O Lord! She utters a thousand holy extravaganees, always endeavoring to please Thee, who holdest her in this state. I know a certain person,* who, though she was no poetess, made very feeling verses "extempore," declaring the sweet pain she suffered, and these were not composed by her understanding; but the better to enjoy that glory which gave her so delightful a pain, she complained thereof to her God, and she wished both her whole body and soul could be torn in pieces, to show the joy she feels in this pain. What torments could then be placed before her which she would not gladly endure for the love of her Lord? She sees clearly that the martyrs did almost nothing in suffering torments, for the soul knows then that her strength comes from some other source than from herself. But what will she feel when she comes to herself again, and is obliged to devise the means of living in the world, and is mixed up again with its cares and occupations? I think I have not at all exaggerated anything

* The Saint, no doubt, alludes to herself; for being once in a rapture, she composed some sublime verses, still extant.

respecting the joy which our Lord is pleased a soul should experience in this place of banishment, for all that I have said is very mean in comparison with the reality. Blessed be Thou, O Lord, forever! may all creatures praise Thee forever. Be now pleased, O my King! and I humbly beseech Thee, that since even now, while I am writing, I am not out of this holy and celestial frenzy (which through Thy goodness and mercy Thou grantest to me as a favor, without any merit of mine), either all those with whom I converse may become fools for your love, or permit me no more to converse with any person, or so order, O Lord, that I may have nothing more to do with the things of this world, or take me quite away from it. O my God! this Thy servant can no longer endure so many afflictions, which she sees come upon her when she has Thee not; if she *must* live, she desires to have no ease in this life, and indeed Thou dost not give her any. She desires to be free from the body; eating is insupportable to her, and sleep afflicts her; she sees that her whole life is passed in satisfying the body, and that now no one but Thee can truly delight her; she seems to live against nature itself, since she desires no longer to live in herself, but in Thee. O my true Lord and my glory! how light and yet how very heavy is the cross which Thou hast prepared for those who have arrived at this degree! It is light, because it is sweet; and it is heavy, because at certain times, no patience in the world can endure it, and yet the soul would never desire to be free from it, unless it were that she might find herself with Thee. And when she remembers that she has not served Thee in anything, but that by living she may then be able to serve Thee, she would gladly endure a burden much more heavy, and would be content not to die until the end of the world. She cares not for any rest or repose, provided she can do Thee any little service. She knows not what to desire, though she knows well that she desires nothing but Thee.

O my son! (for you, to whom this life is directed, and who have commanded me to write it, are so humble that you wish to be called by this name), let these things be known only to yourself, when you see that I do not keep within bounds; for no reason is able to restrain me when our Lord

takes me out of myself. I do not believe it is I who am thus speaking, ever since I communicated this morning. It seems that I dream of what I see, and that I would be glad to see only those who are sick of this same malady which I now have myself. I beseech your Reverence to pray that we may all become fools for the love of Him, who was pleased to be called a "fool" for us. And since your Reverence tells me that you have a regard for me, I wish you may show it by disposing yourself for receiving this favor from our Lord; for I see very few persons who do not take excessive pains for the accomplishment of their desires. But, perhaps, I may be in greater error than every one else. Do not, however, allow this, my father (for you are both a father and a son, because you are my confessor, to whom I have entrusted my soul); undeceive me by telling me the truth, though these truths are but seldom told.

I should be very glad, that as in these days men meet together in secret to conspire against the Divine Majesty, and to propagate their wickedness and heresies; so we five,* who at present love each other in Christ, should also endeavor sometimes to meet together, for the purpose of undeceiving each other, for conferring on the means of reforming ourselves, and of giving God the greatest pleasure. for no one knows himself so well as they know who see us, provided they truly love us, and are anxious for our advancement. I mention this in secret, because no such language is used in the world; even preachers so arrange their sermons as not to give any offence; their intention is good, but we see what the effects are, for few amend their lives. How is it that many still give scandal by their public vices, in spite of these sermons? The reason is, I think, because preachers have too much prudence, and too little of that fire of Divine love which the apostles had, and so it sends out but little heat. I do not say it should be so great as theirs was; but I wish it were greater than what I see now. Does your Reverence know in what it ought principally to consist? In abhorring this life and despising honors; and that, rather than fail in speaking the truth, and maintaining it for the glory of God,

* I do not know the five to whom the Saint alludes.

we should be more ready to lose all than to gain all ; and he who is willing to hazard all things for God, will be as content with the one as with the other. I say not that I am such a person, but I earnestly wish I were. Oh ! glorious liberty ; to esteem as a captivity the being obliged to live and converse according to the laws of this world ! And when this favor is obtained from our Lord, there is no slave who would not venture everything, that so he might redeem himself and return to his own country. And since this is the true way, we should not loiter on the road, for we shall never be able to obtain so great a treasure until we die ; and may our Lord grant us His grace for this purpose. Your Reverence may tear in pieces what I have written if you think proper, and pardon me, for I have been too bold.

CHAPTER XVII.

SHE CONTINUES THE SAME SUBJECT, ON THE THIRD DEGREE OF PRAYER, ETC.

I HAVE already spoken, at considerable length, of this third degree of prayer, and of what the soul should do therein,—or rather what God operates in her ; for now He Himself takes the office of gardener, and wishes the soul to take her rest, provided only that the “ will ” accept of these favors which she enjoys, and offers to submit herself to all that this true Wisdom may be pleased to effect in her : for this purpose courage is certainly necessary. And so great is this joy, that sometimes it seems the soul is just on the point of leaving the body ; and what a happy death that would be !

It appears to me, as I have before mentioned to your Reverence, that it would be well for the soul to abandon herself entirely into the hands of God : if He should wish to take her to heaven, let her go ; if to hell, let her not be troubled, for she will accompany Him who is all her happiness ; if He wish her to leave this life immediately, let her consent thereto ; if to live a thousand years, let her be willing ; let His Majesty dispose of her as of something

which belongs to Him; for the soul is no longer her own, but she belongs wholly to our Lord, and therefore she must be entirely free from care. I say, then, that in so high a degree of prayer as this is, she understands that she performs it without any weariness to the understanding (for when God gives this prayer to a soul, she is able to do all this, and much more, for such are its effects); she is, it seems, as it were amazed at seeing how our Lord performs the office of so good a gardener, and how He wishes her to take no pains or trouble, but only that she would delight herself by beginning to smell the flowers. When the Gardener waters the soul with this water, of which He is the Creator, though it may last only for a short time, yet He gives it in such abundance, that what the poor soul could not obtain by all her efforts in tiring the understanding for twenty years, this heavenly Gardener now does all in a moment; and the fruit grows and ripens so well, that she is able through the good pleasure of our Lord, to support herself by the garden. But He does not give the soul leave to distribute the fruit till she has grown so strong, by having eaten of it, as not to squander it away in tasting it. Thus by not valuing the profit she might make by it, nor receiving anything from those to whom she gave it, she might maintain and feed people at her own cost, while she herself would perhaps die of hunger. What I have said will be understood by such persons, who well know how to apply it, better than I can declare, for I feel tired.

The truth is, that the virtues which are obtained in this prayer remain so much stronger in the soul than those obtained in the Prayer of Quiet, that she cannot be ignorant of them. She sees herself quite another person, and she begins (though scarcely knowing how), to do great things by means of the odor the flowers yield of themselves; for now our Lord is pleased that the flowers should open, that so she may know she has virtues, although she sees very clearly she was not able during several years to acquire them, nor could she till the Heavenly Gardener was pleased in an instant to give them to her. The humility, also, of the soul is greater and more profound in this prayer than in the former, because she sees more clearly that she did nothing

herself, but only consented for our Lord to bestow these favors on her, and for the will to embrace them.

It seems to me, that in this kind of prayer there is a very evident union of the whole soul with God, except that it appears His Majesty gives liberty to the powers of the mind, to understand and enjoy the abundance of what He works in the soul. Sometimes, and even very often, it happens, that the will being thus united (I mention this, that your Reverence may see it can be, and that you may understand it when it happens), she knows and understands that she is tied up, and yet she can enjoy. I repeat, she knows she possesses much quiet and peace, while on the other hand the memory and the understanding are so free, that they are able to treat about business, and attend to works of charity. Now, though this may seem to be all the same with what I said respecting the Prayer of Quiet, yet it is different; because there the soul is in such a state that she would fain not stir nor move, as she enjoys the holy leisure of Mary; whereas, in the Prayer of Union, the soul may also imitate Martha. Thus she performs, almost all together, the duties both of the active and the contemplative life, and she is able to attend to works of charity, and to other business connected with her state: she can also read, though still the faculties are not entirely masters of themselves, and she understands well that the greater part of her attention is occupied elsewhere. It is just as if we were speaking with some one, and that at the same time some other person were speaking with us, in such a manner, that neither to the one, nor to the other were we entirely attentive. It is a something which is perceived very clearly, and gives great satisfaction and content whenever it happens; it serves also as a very excellent preparation, in order that when the soul is in solitude, and free from business, she may enjoy perfect quiet and repose. It is a state of being, as if a person were so satisfied in himself that he would have no necessity at all to eat, but felt his stomach content in such a manner that he would not taste of every kind of food; and yet if he saw any food which he liked, he would not forbear to eat of it. Thus the soul does not satisfy herself, nor is she content to feed on the meat of this world, because she finds in herself that which satisfies

her, viz., the greater pleasure she feels in God, and the desires she has of satisfying her wish, of enjoying His presence more and more.

There is also another kind of union, which is not so entire, though it be greater than that of which I was speaking before, but not altogether so great as that of this Third Water. Your Reverence will be very glad to find it written thus—(should our Lord bestow them all upon you, if you have them not already), and to understand what it is. It is one kind of favor for our Lord to bestow the same favor, and another to understand what grace and favor that is ; and another also to be able to declare it and make it understood. And though it may seem, that the first of these three is only necessary for keeping the soul from being confused and fearful, and for enabling her to go forward with more courage in the way of our Lord, treading under her feet all things of this world ; yet it is a great advantage and favor to understand it. It is proper, therefore, that both he who has it and he who has it not, should greatly praise our Lord for it, because His Majesty has been pleased to give it to some who are alive, in order that He might do us good. Now, I often have this kind of union whereof I am speaking ; and Almighty God is very often pleased to bestow this favor upon me in such a manner, that He makes my will and also my understanding re-collected ; and then it no longer discourses, but is occupied in the enjoyment of God, as one who is looking on, and who sees so much, that he knows not which way to look ; for one thing instantly appears, which takes away the sight of the other, and so nothing makes any impression.

The memory remains free, and so does the imagination seem to do also : and when it sees itself alone, one cannot conceive what a war it makes upon the will and the understanding, and how it endeavors to put everything in confusion. It makes me quite tired, so that I abhor it ; and often have I besought our Lord to deprive me entirely of it on these occasions, if it should continue thus to distract me. Sometimes I say, “When, O Lord, shall all the powers of my soul be wholly united in singing Thy praises, and not be any more divided, without being able to help herself ?” Here I see the evils which sin has brought upon us, since it

hinders us from doing what we would wish, which is to be always occupied with God. I mention how this happens to me sometimes—and even this very day I have had this union, and therefore I remember it the better. My soul has almost exhausted herself, in desiring to be wholly there, where she finds herself for the most part to be already; and yet this appears to be impossible, because both the memory and the imagination make such war upon her, that they allow her not to work. And though they are not able to hurt her, because the other faculties are wanting, yet they do enough by the disquiet they cause. Still I say they do no harm, because they have no strength, nor do they fix themselves in one state: and as the understanding does not help the imagination in that which it represents, neither much nor little, it cannot fix on anything, but goes from one thing to another, just like those importunate and unquiet little gnats which buzz about by night here and there. This comparison seems to me to be extremely proper; for though these faculties have no strength to do any harm, yet they trouble those who feel them. Against this evil I know no remedy, for hitherto God has not enabled me to find any out; and if He had, I should have been glad to use it; for it torments me very often, as I have said. But herein our misery is made apparent, and the power of God also is very evident, since this faculty which is disengaged, puts us to so much trouble, and tires us, while the others which attend His Majesty make us feel so much ease. The sole remedy which I met with, after having wearied myself for many years, is that of which I spoke in the Prayer of Quiet, viz., to consider the memory no better than a madman, and to leave it alone with its folly, for God only can check its extravagancies. And since it remains as a slave to us, we must bear with it patiently, just as Jacob did with Leah, for God bestows a favor upon us in allowing us to enjoy Rachel. I said that it remains a slave, because it cannot attract to itself the other powers, however much it may endeavor to do so, while they, without any labor, often draw it to themselves. Sometimes our Lord is pleased to have pity, when He sees the imagination so much disquieted and lost, through her desire of being with the other faculties; then His Majesty

consents that she should burn in that Divine fire which has already consumed the others, in such a manner as almost to change their nature, so as to make them capable of enjoying such supernatural great blessings.

The joy and glory which the soul enjoys in the different ways whereby she draws water from this Divine Fountain, are so great, that even the body very clearly participates in the joy and delight, and our virtues also increase greatly, as I have mentioned. It seems, our Lord has been pleased I should explain these degrees of prayer, in which the soul sees herself more clearly than can be given her to understand in this life. Your Reverence will do well to consult on the subject with some spiritual and learned person, who has arrived at this degree of prayer. And if he shall tell you that you are going on well, believe that God has said so to you, and consider it a great favor from His Majesty ; because you will, in the course of time, rejoice very much, as I have said, to understand what it is ; though now, while you have the means to enjoy it, he gives you not the grace to understand it. But as His Majesty has given you the first part, you will afterwards understand the rest by your knowledge and learning. May He be praised forever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SAINT SPEAKS ON THE FOURTH DEGREE OF PRAYER.

MAY our Lord teach me some words, whereby I may be able to say something on the fourth method of drawing water. I have great need of His assistance, even more than I had when speaking of the last degree ; for there the soul finds that she is not entirely dead to the world ; and we may say so with truth, because she is still in the world. But, as I have said, she has sufficient understanding to know she is in it, and to feel her solitude ; and she makes use of exterior signs to make what she feels understood. In all the preceding kinds of prayer which I have described, the gardener

labors a little ; though yet in this latter kind of prayer, his labor is accompanied with so much joy and consolation to the soul, that he would be glad were it never to end ; and thus he finds no trouble at all, but rather a subject of glory. In this fourth degree there is no suffering, but only enjoying, though yet without understanding what is enjoyed. He knows, however, that a certain good is possessed, in which all blessings are comprised ; but this good is not comprehended by him. All the senses are occupied with this joy in such a manner, that they cannot apply themselves to anything else, either interiorly or exteriorly. Before (as I have mentioned), a certain liberty was given to them, in order that they might show some signs of the great joy they felt ; but here the soul enjoys much more, beyond comparison, and can make herself understood much less, because both the body and the soul are incapable of communicating that joy : everything would then be an embarrassment, torment, and an obstacle to the repose of the soul. I say, that if there should be a union of all the powers, she cannot, even if she wished, communicate the joy she feels ; and if she could, there would not be a union. How what is called "union" happens, and what it is, I am not able to explain. It is explained in "Mystical theology," of the terms of which I am ignorant : neither do I know what is meant by the "mind," nor the difference between mind and soul ; nor what is a "spirit : " all these seem to be one and the same thing to me ; though sometimes the soul herself springs out, like a fire which is burning, and has burned into a flame ; and sometimes this fire increases with a certain impetuosity, and the flame rises much higher than the fire : but, notwithstanding this, it is not anything different from the fire, but it is the flame itself which is in the fire. Your Reverence will understand this subject by your learning ; I know not how to explain it better.

I wish to mention what the soul feels when she is in this divine union. Every one knows what is meant by a union, viz., when two things, which before were separated, become one. O my Lord ! how good art Thou ! Blessed be Thou forever ! May all creatures praise Thee, O my God ! who hast loved us in such a manner, that we are able to speak with

truth respecting this communication, which Thou holdest with souls, even in this land of exile; and however good they may be, still Thy liberality and magnificence are great in treating with them: in fine, O my Lord! it is Thine own greatness which gives these favors, considering who Thou art. O! infinite Bounty, how magnificent are Thy works! Do they not amaze those who have not their understanding so occupied with the things of this world, as to allow them time to hear and understand the truth? Why shouldst Thou bestow such supernatural favors on souls who have so often offended Thee? This consideration does certainly surpass my understanding; and the more I consider it, the more I am unable to pass on further. Where can one go without being obliged to return back, since I know not how to return Thee thanks for such immense favors? I help myself sometimes by speaking foolish things; and it often happens, both after I have received these favors and when our Lord is beginning to bestow them (I have already mentioned how at the very time I am enjoying them, I have no power to do anything), that I thus address Him: "O Lord! consider what Thou art doing: do not forget so quickly my very grievous sins; and though Thou hast forgotten them so far as to pardon them, yet remember them, I beseech Thee, so as to put some limit to Thy favors. Do not place so precious a liquor in so broken a vessel, O my Creator! since Thou hast already seen how often I have spilt it. Commit not such a precious treasure to one in whom a desire for the consolations of this life has not yet been totally extinguished, as it ought to be: if Thou shouldst commit it, it will be utterly lost. How canst Thou commit the strength of this city, and the keys of the fortress, to a cowardly commander, who, on the first attack of the enemy, is sure to let them enter? O! my Eternal King! let not Thy love of me be so great, as that it should make Thee expose such precious jewels as these to danger. It seems to me, O my Lord! that Thou mayest give the world occasion hereby to undervalue these great favors of Thine, since Thou dost place them in the hands of a creature so base, so weak, so miserable, and of such little worth as I am. And though I now begin to labor, that I may not lose them, through Thy assist-

ance (and I have need of no little, considering who I am), yet I shall not be able, by means thereof, to gain any one else to Thee : in a word, I am a woman, and not a good one, but very wicked. It seems that these Thy talents are thus not only hidden, but even quite buried, by being put in so ungrateful a soil. Thou art not accustomed, O Lord ! to impart such favors and dignities to a soul, but only with a view that she may profit many others. Thou knowest, O Lord ! that sometimes I have begged this favor, and still beg it of Thee, with my whole heart and affection ; and I consider it fit to be content to lose the highest blessing which can be enjoyed upon earth, in order that Thou mayst be pleased to grant it to some other, who will profit more by it to Thine own greater glory." These and other such matters I have often thought of mentioning ; but I afterwards saw my ignorance, and the little humility I possessed, for our Lord knows well what is proper for every one, and that my soul would not have had sufficient strength to save herself, unless His Majesty had bestowed on her so many favors.

I also wish to declare the graces and effects which remain in the soul by this prayer, and what she can do of herself, or if she can in any way be instrumental in bringing herself to so high a state. This elevation of the spirit or union comes with a celestial love ; in my opinion, this union is different from elevation, though yet the soul is elevated in this same union. Whoever has not experienced this last will be of a different opinion ; but yet, even though they should both be the same, our Lord works differently therein ; and by the increase which the soul receives of disengaging herself from all creatures, she seems much greater by that elevation. I have seen clearly that this is a particular favor, although (as I have said) they may both be the same, or at least may seem so. But a small fire is as truly a fire as a great one, and yet we see there is a difference between one and the other. In a small fire it takes a long time before a small piece of iron can be made hot ; but if the fire be great, the iron, though it may also be great, will soon lose the appearance of iron ; just so does it seem to me, in these two kinds of favors from our Lord. I know that whoever shall have

arrived at these raptures will understand me well ; but he who has had no experience therein, will consider what I say to be foolish : and it may be so, for how shall such a creature as I am presume to speak on such a subject, and to make that understood which it seems impossible to think of declaring even by words ? It is not strange, then, if I speak foolish things.

But I believe this of our Lord (for His Majesty knows that, next to obedience, my intention is no other than to make souls desirous of obtaining so high a blessing), that He will assist me herein. I shall say nothing of which I have not had much experience. It is quite true that when I began to write on this last degree, I thought it would be more impossible for me to treat about it, than to speak Greek, so very difficult did I find it : upon this I gave up writing, and went to communion. Oh ! virtue of obedience ! which art able to do all things : may our Lord be praised, who thus favors the ignorant. Oh, virtue of obedience ! which art able to do all things : God enlightened my understanding, sometimes furnishing me with the words I was to use, and at other times by representing to me the manner in which I should express myself : what His Majesty was pleased to do in the former degree of prayer, so it seems that here also He wishes to declare what I myself am not able to express, nor do I know how. What I say is perfectly true, so that whatever is good comes from His teaching ; and what is bad, comes from that sea of misery and sin, which is myself.

But if there be any persons (and there may be many) who have arrived at these degrees of prayer with which our Lord has favored me, though so miserable a creature, and should they wish to speak on these matters with me, thinking they may perhaps have wandered out of the true road, I trust our Lord will so help His servant that she may go forward and declare the truth.

I now wish to speak of that water which comes from heaven in such abundance, as completely and entirely to water this garden : if our Lord never failed to give this water whenever there was any want of it, it is evident what ease the gardener would enjoy ! There would be no winter, but

always the weather would be temperate, and flowers and fruit would never be wanting : then might be seen what delight the gardener would enjoy ! But as long as we live in this world, such a state is impossible ; and we must always take care, whenever we are in want of one of the waters, to procure the other. Sometimes this water falls from heaven when the gardener thinks least of it. True it is, the water comes almost always after a long exercise of mental prayer ; and by degrees our Lord catches this little bird, and places it in a nest, there to repose. And when He has seen it flying for a long time, that is, the soul endeavoring to seek God, and to please Him by her understanding, her will, and all her strength, then He is pleased to reward her even in this life. And how great is the reward He gives ! One moment's enjoyment thereof is sufficient to repay all the trials and afflictions we can endure in this life.

The soul thus going in search of God, finds herself almost sinking under a sweet and most excessive delight, accompanied with a kind of fainting, so that the breath begins to fail, and also all corporeal strength, not indeed attended with great pain, but in such a manner that even the hands cannot be moved ; the eyes are closed without our having any desire to close them ; and when they are open, the soul sees nothing distinctly : if she can read, she is unable to tell a letter, and she knows not how to pronounce it properly. She sees indeed there are letters, but as the understanding does not help her, she knows not how to read, though she should desire. She hears, but understands not what she hears. Thus she receives no benefit at all from her senses, but only that they will not allow her to take the full enjoyment of her pleasure ; and accordingly they do her more harm than good. As to speaking, it is useless to attempt it, for she cannot form any words ; and even if she could, she has no strength to pronounce them ; because all her bodily strength is gone, while that of the soul is increased, that so she may the better enjoy her glory. The exterior delight which she feels is both very great and very evident. This prayer, however long it may last, produces no inconvenience, at least I feel none ; nor do I remember when our Lord bestowed this favor on me, however ill I might be, that I ever

found myself worse : I was, on the other hand, much better. But what harm can so great a blessing do ? Its effects are so manifest, that one cannot doubt it augments the vigor of the soul, since our Lord took away all her bodily strength, though attended with such great delight, in order to leave her still greater strength.

It is true that in the beginning this feeling passes away in a short time, at least it happened so to me ; neither can it be known by these exterior signs, nor by the absence of our senses, since this prayer passes quickly away. But still it is easily discerned by the excess of the favors received, for the heat of the sun must have been great there, since it melted every obstacle.

This point should, in my opinion, be noticed, viz., that however long the time may seem to be in which all the powers of the soul are suspended, it is in reality short : if it should continue for half an hour, that would be very long ; for my part I think I was never so long. It is true one can hardly judge how long the time is, since the person has no outward sense ; but it must be a very short time, in which some of the powers will not return again to themselves. The will is the only power which carries on the work ; the other two quickly become importunate ; but as the will remains quiet, she suspends them again, and then they remain another little while, and live again. In this manner some hours may be passed in prayer, as in reality they are ; for when the two powers have begun to taste this celestial wine, and to be inebriated therewith, they easily lose themselves again, that so they may gain the more ; and as they accompany the will all three enjoy themselves together. But the period during which they remain entirely lost is very short ; and there is no imagination at all ; for, in my opinion, this power is also entirely lost, though they do not so entirely return to themselves, without remaining for some hours, as it were, stupid ; but God recollects them, and brings them back by little and little to Himself.

We now come to the interior of what the soul then feels ; let him declare it who knows it, for it cannot be understood, and much less expressed. I was thinking (when I wished to write these remarks, after having communicated, and having

been engaged in this very prayer on which I am now writing) on what the soul did at that time. Our Lord addressed these words to me : "She forgets herself entirely, in order to give herself more to Me ; it is not she who now lives, but I who live in her : and this is so incomprehensible, that all she can comprehend is,—that she comprehends nothing."

He who has proved these words by experience will be able to understand something of them, for I cannot speak more clearly, since what happens here is so very obscure. I can only say, that their being united with God is represented to them ; and they are so certain thereof that they cannot possibly help believing it. Here all the powers of the soul cease operating, and are suspended in such a manner that in no way can it be understood (as I have mentioned)—that they work. If the soul were thinking of some mystery, it is instantly forgotten, as if there had never been any such thought ; if she were reading, she has no remembrance of what she read, nor of what she was meditating on, and so of praying vocally in like manner. Thus, this importunate little gnat of the memory has her wings burnt here, so that she can no longer move from place to place. The will, however, is entirely occupied in loving, though it understands not *how* it loves. It is not known how the understanding understands ; if it understands at all, at least it can comprehend nothing of that which it understands. To me it appears not to understand, because (as I was saying) it is not understood ; and I have not yet been able to understand this myself.

At first I was in such great ignorance as not to know that God was in all things ; and as He seemed to be so present to me, it appeared impossible for me to believe otherwise. Not to believe that He was there I was unable, because it seemed almost certain that I understood Him to be present. Some unlearned men told me that He was present only by His grace ; this I could not believe, because (as I have said) He appeared to me to be present ; and so I went on in trouble. But, at length, a great and learned man, of the Order of the glorious St. Dominic, freed me from this doubt, and told me, that not only was our Lord present, but that He also communicated Himself to us : these words comforted me much. We must take notice and understand that this celestial water

is always to be considered as a most eminent favor from our Lord, for it endows the soul with most precious advantages, as I shall now mention.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SAINT BEGINS TO DECLARE THE EFFECTS WHICH THIS DEGREE OF PRAYER PRODUCES IN THE SOUL, ETC.

IN this prayer and union the soul is filled with so great tenderness as to be willing to dissolve herself, not through the pain she feels, but by the tears of joy wherewith she is bathed, without knowing *how* or when she shed them. But it gives her great delight to find this impetuosity of the fire allayed by water, which, however, makes it increase the more. This language may seem to be so much "gibberish;" but so it is.

IN this degree of prayer I have sometimes happened to be so entirely out of myself, that I knew not whether I were awake or asleep, or whether in truth I had been in the glory which I felt. I saw myself so bathed in the water, which came from my eyes with such force and speed, that it seemed as if it were poured down from some cloud in the heavens. I found that it was no dream; and this happened at the beginning of this prayer, but it quickly passed away. The soul, however, remains so courageous, that if she could then be cut to pieces for God's sake, it would be a great consolation to her. There are excited and renewed all her promises; her heroic resolutions, the lively efficacy of her desires; her abhorrence of the world: her very clearly seeing her own vanity; and all this is observed much more perfectly and deeply than it was in her former prayers. Her humility becomes much stronger, because now she sees clearly that it was no diligence of hers which procured her this excessive and incomparable favor, nor was her diligence in any way instrumental in making her enjoy this favor; she sees clearly that she is a most unworthy wretch, for if a clear beam of the sun should enter any room, the smallest cobweb cannot be concealed; she sees her misery. She is also so free from

vain-glory, that it seems impossible for her to entertain it, because she has now before her eyes how little she is able to perform, or rather that it is nothing at all; and, also, that there was hardly so much as any consent of hers, but that it seems, whether she would or not, the gates of all her senses were shut up, in order that she might the better enjoy her Lord; and as she remains alone with Him, what has she to do but to love Him? She neither can see nor hear, unless she be forced, and therefore there is little for which to thank her. Her former life is then represented to her with perfect truth, and also the great mercy of God. All this happens without the understanding being obliged to go in search of it, and there she sees ready prepared what she is to eat and understand. She sees also that of herself she deserves hell, and that instead thereof she receives glory, and not punishment. Hence she consumes herself in the praises of God, and I should be glad to do the same now. "Blessed be Thou, O my Lord! who having found me to be such impure water, hast vouchsafed to purify it in such a manner that it may be in some measure not unworthy of Thy table. Be Thou praised, O Joy of Angels! who hast been pleased to exalt so base a worm."

This profit the soul retains for some time, and she already clearly understands that the fruit is not of her own growth; she begins to give part of it to others, without feeling any want of it herself. She begins also to give signs of being a soul that guards heavenly treasures, and she is desirous of making others partake of them, beseeching God that she alone may not be rich. She begins to do good to her neighbors, almost without understanding it, or doing anything herself; but they who receive the benefit understand it well, because the flowers already yield so great a scent, that they make every one desirous of coming to them. People see she has great virtues, and that the fruit is tempting, and they would be glad to help her to eat it. If the earth of this garden (the soul) be cultivated, by labors, and persecutions, and detractions, and sicknesses (and there are few who arrive so far without these things), and if it be loosened from all self-interest, the water sinks so very deep that the soil will scarce ever be dry. But if the soul have as many thorns

as I had in the beginning,—if she do not avoid all the occasions of sin, and if she neglect to acknowledge her obligations to God for so great a favor, she soon again becomes dry. And if the gardener should grow negligent, and our Lord, through His sole goodness should not be willing to give the garden rain, you may give it up as ruined and destroyed. So did it happen to me several times; and truly it amazes me to reflect upon it; if I had not experienced it, I could not have believed it. I write thus for the comfort of such souls as are weak, like mine, that so they may never despair, nor once desist from confiding in the greatness of God, even though they should fall, after having been loaded with such favors as are here mentioned. They must not despair, unless they wish to be totally lost: tears gain everything: one brings another.

One of the reasons by which I have been animated (considering the wretched creature I am) to write this discourse by obedience, and to give an account of my wicked life, and of the favors our Lord had bestowed upon me (and these, not while I was serving, but offending Him), has been this:—I wish I were some person of great authority, that so men might believe me the more in this respect. I entreat our Lord that His Majesty may bestow the favor upon me. I say, that no one of those who have begun to use mental prayer should be dismayed by saying, “If I became wicked again, it would be worse for me to go on with the exercise of prayer.” I believe this, if he should omit prayer, and not correct his life. But if he should not give up prayer, he may be confident it will lead him to the port of life. The devil made so fierce an attack upon me in this point, and I passed so long without prayer (thinking that, being so wicked as I was, it would be an act of greater humility to omit), I gave it over for about a year and a half, or for a year at least, for the half-year I do not remember so well. This was nothing more than making myself fall into hell, without needing any devils for this purpose. O my God, what great blindness! And how well the devil succeeds in his purpose, by laying so heavy a load upon us herein! The traitor knows that he has lost the soul which perseveres in prayer, and that all those falls which he causes us to make, will but

assist us, through the goodness of God, to make us afterwards advance more quickly in His service ; the devil knows all this.

O my Jesus! what a thing it is to see a soul who has arrived at this state fallen into sin! In Thy mercy Thou dost lend her Thy hand to rise again : then will she know the multitude of Thy greatnesses and mercies, and her own misery. Then she comes to annihilate herself in earnest, and to understand Thy greatness : here she presumes not to raise up her eyes to heaven, though yet she raises her thoughts to consider and understand her obligations to Him. Here she becomes devoted to the Queen of Heaven, that she by her prayers may appease Thee. Here she invokes those saints who fell, after Thou didst once call them to Thy service, in order that they may assist her. Here she believes, that whatever crosses Thou dost send, they are all too light, because she sees she does not deserve the very ground on which she stands. Here she has recourse to the Sacraments, and to that lively faith which remains in her, from seeing the great efficacy God has given them. She praises Thee for having left such ointments and medicine for the cure of our wounds ; and these not only close them, but heal them entirely : at all this she is amazed. And who, O Lord of my soul! ought not to be amazed at so great mercy and increased favors, in spite of treasons which are so foul and abominable, that I wonder how my heart does not break when I write these things, because I am a wicked wretch. And yet it seems as if I wished to make Thee some kind of satisfaction for so many treasons, by shedding these few poor tears, given by Thee, and which, as far as concerns me, are but so much water drawn from a muddy well. Still, I am always committing evil, and endeavoring to frustrate the favors which Thou hast done me. Be pleased, O my Lord, to give value to my tears. Make these tears, O Lord, acceptable to Thee : purify the troubled water of my soul, that so no temptation may be given to any one, of forming rash judgments, as was the case with me ; for I often thought, why Thou dost pass over, O Lord, other very holy people, who have always served Thee and suffered for Thee, and have been brought up in religion, and who are indeed truly

religious ; and not like me, who had nothing more than the name : and yet I see clearly Thou hast not shown such favors to them as Thou hast to me. But I know well, O my Eternal God ! Thou keepest their reward in store, that Thou mayest give it to them altogether, and that my weakness requires such treatment. But those others, like valiant men, serve Thee without it, and so Thou treatest them as Thou wouldst people strong in courage who have no interest of their own.

But notwithstanding all this, Thou knowest, O Lord, that often I cried out before Thee, excusing those persons who spoke against me, because I thought they had too much reason for what they said. But this happened, O Lord ! when already, through Thy goodness, Thou hadst prevented me from offending Thee so much ; and when I was already endeavoring to avoid whatever might offend Thee. And when I began to do this, Thou, O Lord ! didst begin to open Thy treasures to this Thy servant. And it seems Thou didst expect nothing more, than that I might be inclined and prepared to receive them ; so quickly didst Thou begin, not only to bestow them, but to wish that men should know Thou hadst given them.

And when this was known, some began to have a good opinion of me, though all were not aware how wicked I was : still a great deal of my wickedness transpired. Then men began, all at once, to calumniate me, and persecute me ; and, in my opinion, not without great cause. But still, I entertained no enmity against any one, but only besought Thee to consider what reasons they had. They said that I wished to pass for a saint, and that I invented certain novelties, though I was not then able, by a great deal, even to fulfil all the duties of my rule ; nor had I overtaken, in the way of virtue, those most pious and religious nuns who were in the monastery. And I think I shall never be able to arrive thereto, unless God in His goodness be pleased to perform everything on His side ; rather was I inclined to do away with everything which was good, and to establish certain customs which were not good : at least, I did what I could to introduce them ; and in doing evil I always had power enough : and thus men blamed me without any fault of theirs. I do not

say that they were nuns only; other persons also told me truths, because Thou didst permit them.

When once I was saying my office, and came to this verse, "Thou art just, O Lord! and Thy judgments are right," as I was sometimes subject to this temptation, I began to consider how true these words were. In this respect, the devil never had any power to tempt me so far, as to make me doubt but that Thou, O Lord! art the author of all goodness; nor could he prevail over me in anything relating to Faith: rather did it seem to me, that the more the articles of faith were *above* nature, the more firmly did I believe them, and the more devotion they excited within me. And as Thou art omnipotent, all the manifestations of Thy greatness which Thou mightest display, I resolved upon to execute; and of this (as I have said) I had no doubt. And when I was afterwards considering how, since Thou art just, Thou couldst permit so many dear servants of Thine to be without having received those favors and caresses which Thou didst bestow upon me, Thou didst return this answer: "Serve Me, and do not trouble thyself about anything else." These were the first words which I heard You speak to me, and therefore I was greatly astonished thereat. I will afterwards declare this manner of hearing and understand things, together with other matters. I do not wish to speak of them here, for they would be out of place, and I think I have wandered from my subject already: indeed, I scarcely know what I have said. But it cannot be otherwise, and your Reverence must bear with these interruptions; for when I consider how much God has endured from me, and when I see myself in this state, it will not be strange if I lose the thread of what I say, and of what I intend saying.

May our Lord grant that all my wanderings may be of this kind; and may His Majesty never permit me to wander a hair's breadth from Him; rather may I be consumed, even at this very moment. It is sufficient to consider his great mercies towards me, by which He has pardoned my base ingratitude, not once, but many times. He pardoned Peter once, but me He pardoned often; and hence, with reason did the devil tempt me, hoping that I would not pretend to

hold any close friendship with One to whom I had been so public an enemy. How great was this blindness of mine! And where could I think, O my Lord! of finding any remedy, but in Thee? What folly was it to fly from the light, and to go on forever stumbling in the dark! What an arrogant humility was it which the devil invented for me, by persuading me no longer to support myself against that pillar and staff which could prevent my fall from being so great! I am now at this moment blessing myself, for I think I never escaped so imminent a danger as this deceit which the devil taught me by the way of humility. He made me think it would be impossible that so wretched a creature as I am, and who had received such great favors from God, should ever be able to arrive at mental prayer; that it would be sufficient if I said those vocal prayers to which I was bound, like all the others did; but that now, since I did not perform even these prayers well, why should I wish to do more? This would imply little reverence for God, and it would be undervaluing his favors. It was profitable to think and to know all this; but to put it in execution would have been a very great evil. Be thou blessed, O Lord! who didst supply me with a remedy! for this temptation seems to have been nothing less than the beginning of that which the devil brought upon Judas; but the traitor did not dare to attack me so openly as he did Judas: he approached by little and little, just as he attacked him.

Let all those who use mental prayer consider this well, for the love of God. Let them know that during the time I omitted using it, my life was much worse. Behold, what a *fine* remedy the devil gave me, and what *admirable* humility that was which produced in my soul only trouble and uneasiness! But how, indeed, could my soul find repose? The wretched creature abandoned her true repose: she remembered her favors and graces, and she found that the pleasures of this world were loathsome. I wonder how I could have remained so long in this state. It was with the hope that I might remain very free from sin; for as far as I remember (though it is now more than twenty-one years), I was always resolved to return to mental prayer. But oh! how ill-grounded was my hope! But though I afterwards

gave myself to prayer and reading (which were capable of making me see the truth, and of discovering to me the evil course I was holding), and though I often prayed to our Lord with many tears, yet I was so very wicked and wretched, that I knew not how to help myself: and as moreover I began to omit these good practices, and to employ myself in idle pastimes, and to expose myself to many occasions of sin, having at the same time but very few helps (or rather, I should say, *none at all*), what else could I expect but to lose my soul? I believe that a certain religious, of the order of St. Dominic, a very learned man, had much merit before God; for he it was who roused me from my lethargy. He made me (as I think I have already mentioned) receive the Blessed Sacrament every fortnight; and my misery being then not so great, I began to return to myself again, though I still committed some offences against our Lord. But because I had not lost my way, I still went on falling and rising by little and little. But he who perseveres in going forward, will at length arrive at the end of his journey, though perhaps late. To me it seems one and the same thing for a soul to lose her way and to leave off her prayer: may our Lord deliver us from this evil, for His mercy's sake.

The conclusion to be drawn from what I have said (and I desire it may be well attended to, for the love of our Lord,) is this: that though a soul may arrive at such a degree as to induce our Lord to bestow many favors upon her in prayer, yet she must not place any confidence in herself, since she may fall; nor must she on any account expose herself to occasions of sin. Let her consider this well; for the deceit which the devil may employ afterwards is very great; and though the favors received might most certainly be from God, yet the traitor will not fail to take advantage of these favors in whatever way he can, especially against persons who are not strong in virtue and mortification, nor entirely disengaged from this world; such should remember, that they are not, by means of this prayer, sufficiently fortified (as I shall afterwards declare,) if they should place themselves in dangerous occasions, however strong their desires and resolutions may be. This is excellent doctrine;

and it is not mine, but taught by God himself; and so I shall be glad if all ignorant persons, like myself, would learn it, because though a soul may have arrived at this degree of prayer, she must never trust herself so far as to go forth to the combat; she will do enough if she can defend herself. In this state it will be necessary for her to use arms, to defend herself against the devils, for as yet she has not strength enough to *attack* them, and much less to tread them under her feet, as those persons will be able to do who shall have arrived at that state of which I shall afterwards speak. This is a deceit of the devil, by which he imposes upon us, viz., that when once he sees a soul has arrived so near to God as to see what a difference there is between the joys of this life and the next, and to know what love our Lord shows to her, from this very love he makes such a confidence and security to arise, as if she would never fall away from what she is enjoying. She also appears to see her reward so clearly, that she is easily induced to consider it impossible for her to leave that which, even in this life, is so pleasant and delightful, for the pleasures of this world, which are so base and insignificant. By this confidence the devil deprives her of that distrust she ought to have in her own strength; and thus (as I was saying) she exposes herself to danger, and begins with great zeal to give away to others, without any rule or measure, the fruit of her garden, thinking she has no longer any reason to be afraid of herself. And she imagines this is not done through pride (for the soul knows well she can do nothing of herself) but through the great confidence she has in God. But all this is done without discretion, because she does not consider that she has as yet hardly any feathers: she may indeed get out of the nest, and God himself takes her out; but she cannot fly, because her virtues are not yet strong enough; neither has she sufficient experience to know her dangers, nor is she aware of the evil which arises from putting confidence in herself.

This is what ruined me; and hence a director and conversation with spiritual persons are very necessary for this and other objects. I am fully persuaded that when God once brings a soul to this state, He will continue to caress her, and not suffer her to perish, if she do not entirely forsake

Him. But if she should fall, let her consider, and consider again, for the love of God, lest the devil should deceive her, by inducing her to omit mental prayer, as he induced me under a false humility : this I have already mentioned, and I wish to mention it very often. But let her trust in the goodness of God, which is greater than all the sins we can commit ; and let her hope that He will not remember our ingratitude, when knowing ourselves we wish to return to His friendship again, nor the favors He has bestowed upon us, so as to make us be punished for them ; but that rather they will obtain pardon for us so much the sooner, as for persons who have belonged to His house, and have eaten of His bread, as the saying is, let them remember His words, and consider how He has proceeded with me ; for I grew tired with offending His Majesty, before He grew tired with pardoning me. Never does he grow weary in giving ; never can His mercies be dried up ; and so let us never grow weary of receiving His favors. May He be blessed forever, Amen. May all creatures praise Him.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SAINT TREATS OF THE DIFFERENCE WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN UNION AND RAPTURE, ETC.

I SHOULD be glad to know how to explain, by the Divine assistance, the difference there is between union and rapture, or, as it is called, elevation of the soul, for these mean one and the same thing. It is also called an "Ecstasy:" the names are different, but they signify one and the same thing. The advantage arising from "Rapture" is very great. The effects, likewise, as well as many other operations which it produces, are much greater, for "Union" seems to be the same both in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end, and it takes place in the interior.

But as a "Rapture" is an elevation of the soul in a much higher degree, it produces effects both interior and exterior. May our Lord enable me to explain this part of the subject, as He has assisted me in the rest ; for, certainly, if His

Majesty had not made me understand, by what means and in what manner it might be done, I should not have been able to say anything.

Let us now consider that this last water (of which I have been speaking) is so very plentiful and abundant, that if we were capable of receiving it, we should believe the cloud of that divine Majesty were with us, which waters our souls here upon earth. And thus, when we are grateful to our Lord for this great blessing, and acknowledge our gratitude by our good works, according to our strength, our Lord attracts that soul, just in the same way as the clouds attract the vapors from the earth, and mount up towards heaven: and so He takes the soul along with Him himself, and begins to show her the riches of that kingdom which He has prepared for her. I know not if the comparison be just and suitable, but this happens truly and really. In these raptures, it seems as if the soul did not animate the body: it feels very sensibly the want of natural heat, and becomes cold, though possessing the greatest sweetness and delight.

Here there is no means of resisting, though in "Union" (being then in our own country) there is a remedy; and so we may almost always resist, though not without pain and using some violence. But here, for the most part, there is no remedy at all; for very often the rapture happens without our thinking of it, or employing any means of bringing it on: and then there comes such a quick and strong impetuosity, that you see and feel this cloud raising itself up, or rather, this strong eagle carries you away between her wings (and this is understood), for you know you are carried away, though you know not whither, because though you may feel delight, yet so great is the weakness of our nature that it makes us fear at first. Hence it will be necessary for the soul to be much more determined and courageous than she was when in the degree of union, in order to be able to hazard everything, and to abandon herself entirely into the hands of God, and willingly to go wheresoever she shall be carried, though they will take her whether willing or no. Sometimes the rapture was so great that very, very often I wished to resist, and employed all my strength for this object (especially when the raptures happened in public,

and many other times also when they were private), fearing lest I might be deluded. Sometimes I was able to make a slight resistance, but it cost me great trouble ; for it seemed like one fighting with a strong giant, so that afterwards I found myself very tired : but at other times it was impossible to resist, for my soul was carried quite away ; and generally even my head, and sometimes my whole body, were raised from the ground. This last happened but seldom : it happened once, however, when we were altogether in the choir, and when I was on my knees (being then about to receive the Blessed Sacrament). I was exceedingly troubled thereat ; and as it seemed to me to be a very extraordinary circumstance, and that great notice might be immediately taken of it, I commanded the nuns not to speak of it ; and this I did because I then held the office of prioress. But, at other times, when I began to see that our Lord was about to do the same again (once in particular, during a sermon, being the feast of our patron, and in the presence of many ladies of quality), I cast myself on the ground ; and though the Religious came and kept my body down, yet the rapture was easily perceived. I accordingly besought our Lord that He would no more grant me such favors as would bear exterior demonstrations, because I was already very weary by being so watchful over myself, and His Majesty could not bestow such favors upon me without their being known. And it seems that, through His goodness, He has heard my prayer, for since that time I have had no raptures of the kind, though it is not long since the last happened.

But when I wished to resist, there seemed to be something under my feet of such great strength, that I know not what to compare it to ; and it came with much greater impetuosity than any other thing which I ever experienced in my soul : hence I was torn, as it were, to pieces, because the combat was terrible. In a word, all my resistance was of little use, because when our Lord wishes to do anything, no power can stand against Him. At other times He is pleased to content Himself with letting us see that He desires to do us this favor, and that it only remains for us to receive it from His Majesty ; and when we resist for the sake of humility, the same effects follow, as if we had en-

tirely consented. These effects are very great : first, the great power of our Lord is made manifest thereby : second, that when His Majesty wishes, we are as little able to detain our bodies as our souls ; that we are not masters of them, but that there is a Superior by whom all these favors are given ; and that, being nothing ourselves, we can do nothing. These considerations fill us with deep humility : and I acknowledge that these raptures excited in me great fear : and at the beginning I was extremely terrified to see a body raised from the earth ; for though it is the spirit which draws it after her, and this with great feelings of delight if no resistance be made, yet we do not lose our senses ; at least, I had mine in such a manner that I was able to understand I had been raised up. There also appears so great a majesty in Him who can do this, that it makes even the hair of one's head stand on end ; and there remains a great fear of offending so mighty a God : this fear, however, is accompanied by an exceeding great love, which the soul conceives again for Him, who she sees bears so deep a love for such a wretched worm ; for He seems not content with really drawing the soul to Himself, but He wishes to draw the body also, even when it is mortal and composed of such filthy dust as we have made it by our sins. This also leaves in the soul a particular disengagement from all things in the world, but I cannot explain what it is. I think, however, I may say, that it is not only in some degree a different, but also a much greater kind of favor, than any of those other things which act on the soul alone ; for though in those other visitations, there is also, as far as relates to the soul, a total disengagement from the things of this world, yet here, it seems, our Lord is pleased, that even *the body itself* should act in the same manner : it likewise excites such a new aversion for the pleasures of this life, that it makes life itself much more painful to us. It afterwards gives another pain, which we can neither procure when we have it not, nor free ourselves from when we have it. I should be very glad to be able to make this "great pain" understood, but I think I shall not be able ; still, I will say something, if I can.

I must remark, that these things now happen at the very last, after all those visions and revelations whereof I shall

write, and during the time when I am in prayer, when our Lord is accustomed to give me very great sweetness and caresses; and though I sometimes continue to experience the same sweetness, yet the pain of which I shall now speak comes upon me much more frequently. It is sometimes less and sometimes greater. I now wish to speak of the greater, because though I shall treat hereafter of those great impetuositities which I experienced when our Lord was pleased to give me those raptures; yet, in my opinion, there was as little resemblance between them, as there is between things spiritual and corporal. I believe I do not at all exaggerate the matter, because this pain seems to be such, that though the soul feels it, yet she feels it together with the body, and so both of them share in it; but she feels not that extremity of abandonment which this pain causes, and in which (as I have already mentioned) we have no part ourselves. But there often comes unexpectedly a kind of transport, the cause of which I know not; and this transport, which penetrates the whole soul in an instant, begins to agitate the soul to such a degree, that she rises above herself and all created things; and God makes her so disgusted with them, that however much she may strive, she cannot find on earth any creature for a companion: and even if she could, she would prefer to die in that solitude. If people speak to her, or if she employed all the power which she could possibly possess, in speaking to others, it would be of little use, for her spirit (however much she may strive) is still attached to that solitude. And though it seems to me, as if God were there at a very great distance from her, yet at times He communicates His greatness to her, in a manner the most extraordinary that can be imagined or expressed; and I think that he only can believe or understand it who has experienced it himself; for it is no communication to give comfort, but only to show the reason which he has to be afflicted, on account of being absent from that good which comprehends all good.

By means of this communication, the desire increases of remaining in that extreme solitude in which the soul finds herself, together with a pain which is so very acute and penetrating, that she may then, I think (being placed in this desert), literally make use of these words: "I have watched,

and become as a sparrow all alone on the house-top." These words the royal prophet, perhaps, spoke when he was in the same solitude; but being a saint, our Lord made him feel them in a more sensible manner. This verse comes into my mind, because it seems as if I see myself in it; and I am consoled in seeing that other persons also have found themselves in such great solitude, and the greatest saints more than any one else. And thus it appears that the soul in this state is raised, not only above all created things, but even above herself. ✓

At other times, the soul seems to find herself in the very extremity of misery, asking herself this question: "Where is thy God?" I must remark, that I did not understand the meaning of these words in the Psalms; but after they were explained to me, I was much comforted in seeing that our Lord brought them to my memory, without any endeavor on my part. At other times, I remembered the words of St. Paul, "that he was crucified to the world." I say not that I was crucified, for I see clearly I am not; but it seems to me, that the soul in this case, is as it were, crucified, and suspended between earth and heaven; and hence no comfort comes from heaven, because she is not there, nor from the earth, because she is no longer upon it; and she suffers all the time, without receiving any succor from either place. That which does come to her from heaven, is so great a knowledge of God, that she loses herself in the contemplation of His infinite greatness; and this knowledge increases rather than diminishes her pain, because her desire of possessing Him increases in such a manner, that, in my opinion, the excessive pain sometimes takes away her senses; but she remains without them only a little while. This state seems to be the very agony of death itself; and yet it is accompanied with such a great pleasure and content in suffering, that I know not what to compare it to. It is a sharp and yet a delightful kind of martyrdom, since everything relating to this world which can possibly be represented to the soul, even though it were the most delightful object, is on no account admitted, but rather it is immediately cast away from her. She understands well, that she cares for nothing but for her God; and yet she loves in Him no

particular perfection, but all His perfections together ; still, she knows not what she wishes or desires. I say, she knows not, because her imagination represents nothing to her ; and during all the time she remains in this state, the powers of the soul do not (in my opinion) produce that joy which is felt in union and rapture ; the pain entirely suspends them.

Oh ! that I were able to make your Reverence understand what I have been saying, even were it only for the object of your telling me what the state is in which the soul finds herself, for this is the condition in which my soul generally remains. When she is not occupied, she then falls into these agonies of death ; and she is afraid when she sees them begin, lest she might die under them. But yet when once begun, she would be glad to remain in this suffering state during all the time of her life, though the pain is so very excessive that the person is scarce able to endure it. Sometimes I am almost without any pulse at all (as my sisters tell me when they come to see what is the matter, for now they understand a little more about me), and the bones of my very arms are quite exposed, and my hands become so stiff that sometimes I cannot close them ; and thus the pain remains in my wrists till the next day, and in my whole body also in such a manner, that it seems as if I had been disjoined. Sometimes I think, if I continue in this state, that our Lord will be pleased to end it by my life coming to an end ; for, in my opinion, so great suffering is sufficient for this object, except only that I do not deserve such a happiness. All my desire then is to die : I neither remember purgatory, nor those great sins I have committed, for which I deserve hell ; all is forgotten through my desire of seeing God, and the desert and solitude then appear to me far sweeter than all the society of the whole world. If anything could give her comfort, it would be to converse with some one who had experienced this same torment ; for now, though she complains thereof, no one it seems will believe her.

The extremity of this pain also contributes to her torment, since she neither wishes for solitude as others do, nor for any company, except for those persons to whom she might be able to complain. It is with her as with one who has a halter about his neck ; and who, while he is strangling,

endeavors to take his breath ; and thus does this desire for company seem to me to be the effect of our natural weakness. And as this pain puts us in danger of death (that such is the effect is certain, for sometimes I have seen myself in this danger, through my great infirmities and other occasions which I have mentioned ; and I think I may say that this danger is as great as all the rest) ; so the desire which both body and soul have not to be separated, is that which asks the help of taking breath ; and, by expressing the desire, and complaining, and diverting itself, it seeks for some means of living, though much against the will of the spirit, or of the superior part of the soul, which does not wish to be free from this pain.

I know not if I am correct in what I say, or if I know how to speak ; but to the best of my judgment, this is the state of the soul. Your Reverence may now see what kind of ease I can enjoy in this life, since that which I used to find in prayer and solitude (for therein our Lord consoled me much) is now changed into this torment ; and yet it is so delicious, and the soul sees it to be of such value, that she now delights in it more than in all those other caresses she used to enjoy. It seems to her more secure, because it is the way of the cross, and it possesses in itself a pleasure of great value also, in my opinion ; because she allows the body nothing but pain, and the soul is that which suffers, and which alone feels the joy and content which this suffering gives her. I know not how all this can be, but yet it is so ; and I would not change this favor which our Lord bestows upon me (which comes from His hand, as I have said, and is in no way acquired by me, because it is entirely supernatural), for all those others which I shall afterwards speak of : I say not, for all of them together, but for *any one* of them taken separately. With regard to these impetuosities, it must be remembered that they happened *after* those favors which our Lord first bestowed upon me, and also after all that whereof I shall make mention in this book, and likewise after having received that favor which our Lord now gives me. As I was in some fear at the beginning (and this happens almost always when our Lord does me any favor, until, as I proceed, I receive some security from His Majesty), He told me “not to

fear," but to esteem this favor greater than all the others He had bestowed upon me, because the soul was purified by this pain, and was burnished and refined, as gold was in the crucible, that so she might be better prepared for receiving the enamels of His gifts; and that being purified here, she might have the less to suffer in purgatory. I knew well that this was a great favor: but after this I enjoyed much more security, and my confessor also tells me that it is good. And though I was formerly afraid, yet, because I am so wicked, I could never believe it was bad; but rather, the very greatness of the benefit gave me a certain fear, when I remembered how far I was from deserving it. Blessed be the Lord who is so good. Amen.

I think I have wandered from my subject, for I began by speaking of raptures; but what I have just been speaking of is much greater than raptures, and so it leaves those effects in the soul, which I have been relating. I will now speak of these raptures, and of that which usually happens therein. I wish to mention then, how the rapture often left my body so light, that all the weight thereof was quite taken away, and sometimes to such a degree, that I hardly knew how to set my feet on the ground. But when the soul is in a rapture, the body remains as it were dead, being often unable to do anything at all of herself; and as it happens to be at the time, so it remains, whether it be in a sitting posture, or whether the hands be opened or closed; for though she loses her senses a few times (and the same has happened to me now and then), yet they have been seldom *entirely* lost, and then only for a short time. The usual effect is, that she is disturbed a little; and though she can do nothing of herself, as far as regards the exterior, yet, she is able both to understand and to hear, as if something were spoken to her from afar off. I say not that she understands and hears when she is in the very height of her rapture (I use the words, "the very height"), at that time when the faculties are lost, because they are very closely united with God; and then, in my opinion, she neither sees nor hears. But, as I mentioned in the former prayer of Union, this total transformation of the soul into God continues only for a short time; but, as long as it lasts, no power of

the soul either feels or knows what passes there. And it seems to be for this object, that as long as we live in this world, it is not God's will we should understand what passes there, because we are not capable of understanding it; at least, I myself have experienced this.

But your Reverence will perhaps ask me, how is it that raptures should sometimes last so many hours? I answer, that what happened to me very often (as I have mentioned in the former prayer) is this: that we enjoy raptures only by intervals, and the soul often engulfs herself, or rather (to speak more correctly) our Lord engulfs the soul in Himself; and as He keeps her there for awhile, there remains only her will which she can make use of. As to the exercise of those other two powers, it seems to me to be like that of a needle on a sun-dial, which never stands still; but yet when the Sun of Justice wishes, He makes them stop. This, I say, lasts but for a short time. As, however, the impulse and exaltation of the spirit were great, the will remains engulfed, and acts like a sovereign lady over all the operations of the body, because those other two restless powers wish to disturb her: the senses, however, do not disturb her. And thus they also are suspended, because our Lord is so pleased. The eyes, too, are mostly shut, though we may not wish to shut them; and if sometimes they be open, yet, as I have already mentioned, the soul does not consider nor advert to what she sees.

The body is now much less able to do anything of herself; and even after the three powers have been united, it can do but little. Let him, therefore, to whom our Lord shall grant this favor, not be astonished when he sees the body so weak for many hours, and his memory and understanding sometimes so apt to wander. True it is, that souls are ordinarily, in this state, *drowned* in the praises of God, and in desiring to comprehend or understand what has taken place in them; and even for this object they are not wholly awake, but like a person who has slept and dreamt a great deal, and is not yet quite awake. I have thus explained myself at some length, because I know there are persons at this time, and even in this place, on whom our Lord has bestowed these favors; and if those who direct these religious have not ex-

✓ perience in these matters, they will perhaps think, especially if they be not learned, that in these raptures the persons are as it were dead. It is a subject of grief to consider how much one suffers from such confessors, who do not understand these matters, as I shall afterwards mention. Perhaps I know not what I say; but your Reverence will understand if I should say anything to the purpose, since our Lord has already given you experience herein; though as it is not long since you began, you may not perhaps have considered the subject so much as I have. But though I endeavored to do so very often, and to the best of my power, yet the body has not strength enough to stir itself, for the soul takes all its strength away with her. Thus a sick person often recovers his health, and she who was full of weakness and pain regains her strength, because great favors are given in this state. And sometimes (as I was saying) our Lord is pleased that the body also should experience a certain degree of joy, because it obeys what the soul desires. When she has returned to herself, it may happen (if the rapture has been great), that she will go for a day or two, or even for three days, with the powers so absorbed, and as it were engulfed in God, that she seems out of herself.

✓ But in this state she feels it painful to be still obliged to live in the world; for now, having lost her weak feathers, others have come strong enough to enable her to fly well: now the banner of Christ is so directly unfurled, that there seems to remain nothing more but that the captain of this fort may either ascend himself, or be carried up to the highest tower, there to plant this standard for the glory of God. She now looks upon those who are below as one who is already in safety; for so far is she from fearing danger, that she rather wishes it, like one for whom victory is secured in a most certain manner. Now she sees very clearly how little all wordly things ought to be esteemed, and what a "nothing" they are. He who is in a high place sees many things. Now she does not wish to have any other will but the will of our Lord, and she gives Him the keys of hers. From being a gardener, she has now become a governor; she wishes to do nothing but the will of God, nor does she desire to be the governor of herself, nor indeed of anything, not even of a

single well in this garden ; and if there be anything good in it, she wishes His Majesty to divide the fruits thereof ; for, from that time forward, she desires nothing of her own, but only that all things may be done in conformity with His will and for His glory. Everything happens in this way truly and really, if the raptures be real, and the soul enjoys the effects and advantages which I have mentioned. But if such are *not* the effects, I should doubt much whether the raptures come from God, but should rather be inclined to fear they were of that kind of ravings whereof St. Vincent speaks. This I know, and through experience I have seen that here the soul remains a queen over all things, and acquires in less than an hour so much liberty, that she is not able to know herself. But yet she knows well all this is not her own ; nor does she know how she came to obtain so great a blessing : still she understands clearly the exceeding great advantage which every one of these raptures brings with it. No one can believe all this but he who has experienced it himself ; and therefore men cannot believe that a poor soul, which they knew was before so wicked, can so soon undertake to do such wonderful things, because she immediately resolves not to be content with serving our Lord in small things, but to serve Him in most difficult matters also. But men are apt to imagine that such resolutions are only temptations and foolishness. But if they would consider that they come not from herself, but from our Lord, to whom she has already given up the keys of her will, they would not wonder so much at it. I am of opinion, that a soul which arrives at this state neither says nor does anything of herself, but this Sovereign King takes care of everything which is to be done. O my God ! how clearly does a soul see here the meaning of that verse, "Who will give me the wings of a dove ?" The prophet David had reason to make this request, and so have we all. That "flight" is clearly meant which the soul takes, in order to raise herself above all creatures, and before all things above herself : but this "flight" is sweet ; it is a pleasant flight, and a flight without noise. What dominion does such a soul possess which our Lord conducts to this degree, that she looks down upon all things without being entangled by them ! How full of confusion is she for the

time in which she was entangled by them! How astonished at her blindness! How full of compassion for those who still remain in this blindness, especially if they be people of prayer, and such as God is pleased to caress! She desires to cry aloud, that so all may understand how much they have been deceived, and this she does sometimes; and then men pour down upon her head a thousand persecutions; they treat her as having but little humility, and as one who wishes to *teach* those from whom she ought rather to learn, especially if she be a woman, then they condemn her; and perhaps they have reason for so doing, because they know not by what impulse she is moved. And as she knows not how to help herself on the one hand, so on the other she cannot forbear undeceiving those persons whom she loves, and whom she desires to behold free from the prison of this life, for the state wherein she was seems neither more nor less than a prison.

✓ She is much afflicted at the thought of that time in which she attended to points of honor; and for the error and deceit into which she fell, by believing *that* to be honor which the world calls honor. She sees that it is a very gross lie, and that all men live in the practice of it. But now she understands that real honor is not false, but true; and she esteems *that* to be worth something which indeed is so, and considers that to be nothing which is in reality so; since all is nothing, and less than nothing, which will one day have an end, and because it does not please God. She laughs at herself for the time in which she made any account of money, and had a desire for it: though in this particular I do not believe (and this is the truth) that I ever had any fault to confess; but it would have been a fault to have esteemed or desired money in any way. If by means of it I could have purchased those blessings which I now see in myself, I might have valued it very much; but the soul now perceives that such blessings are purchased best by leaving all things. And what is that which can be purchased by this money, which men so much desire? Is it anything of value? Anything durable? And for what object do we desire it? A miserable repose is purchased, and dearly does it cost us; for often do we purchase hell by it, endless torments in

everlasting fire! O! that all men, then, would resolve to consider it as earth, which is good for nothing! In what harmony would the world then move! How free from unjust contracts! In what friendship would all men live, if they would not hanker after honors or riches! In that case I think every evil would be remedied.

The soul also sees that there is great blindness respecting the delights of this world, and that by them nothing is purchased, even for this life, but trouble and affliction. What trouble, and what little pleasure! What labor in vain! Here she perceives not only the cobwebs of her soul—that is, her great faults—but even the smallest grain of dust, because the Sun is very bright. And so, however much the soul may have labored to perfect herself, if this same Sun should truly strike her with its beams, then she sees how dusty everything is. It is like a glass full of water, which you think to be very pure and clear, if the sun do not shine upon it; but when the sun does shine, you find it to be all full of animalculæ. This comparison is literally true; for before the soul is in this ecstacy, she thinks that she has been very careful not to offend God, and that she endeavored to do so to the best of her power. But when she has arrived so far, that this Sun of Justice makes her open her eyes, then she sees so many motes in them that she would be glad to shut them again; for she has not yet become so strong, like the courageous eagle which bred her, as steadily to fix her eyes on this Sun. But however little she may open them, she sees herself covered with imperfections, and then she remembers the verse, “Who shall be pure in Thy sight?” When she beholds this Divine Sun, she is dazzled by the brightness thereof: but when she looks upon herself, her eyes are stopped up with clay; and so this little dove is blind. And sometimes it happens that she remains entirely blind, being absorbed, amazed, and as it were out of herself, at all the greatness that she beholds. Here true humility is acquired; for she cares not either about speaking well of herself, or about others doing it: she wishes our Lord, and not herself, to divide the fruits of the garden, and so nothing sticks to her fingers. All the good that she has is directed and referred to God; and if she should say anything of her-

self, it is for His glory, for she knows that she has nothing of her own : of this she cannot be ignorant, even if she would, because she knows it by the very sight of her eyes, which are shut to the things of this world, but open for understanding the truth, whether she is willing or no.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SAINT CONTINUES AND FINISHES THIS LAST DEGREE OF PRAYER.

I WILL now finish what I was saying, viz., that here the soul has no occasion to give any fresh consent, since she has already given it; and she knows that she has willingly delivered herself into His hands, and that she cannot deceive Him who knows all things. It is not as things are in this world, which is full of deceit and duplicity; for when you think you have fully gained the good will of any one, by the proofs he gives, you soon discover that it is all pretence and falsehood, so that no one knows how to live in a world so deceitful, especially when self-interest is concerned. Blessed is that soul to which our Lord gives the knowledge of the truth. What a blessing this would be for kings, and how much more profitable for them, than to rule great provinces! What justice would be found in the kingdom! How many evils would be avoided, both now and hereafter! Here there is no fear of losing life or honor for the love of God; rather would such losses be considered as great blessings by those who have more regard for the glory of God, than for those to whom they are less obliged; for kings are those whom men follow. The prospect of extending the faith, and of enlightening the minds of heretics, ought to induce kings to lose a thousand kingdoms for the sake of gaining a kingdom that will never end. And when a soul comes to taste but a single drop of its heavenly water, everything in this world will appear disgusting to her. And when a soul shall be entirely engulfed in this ocean of happiness, what joy will be hers! O Lord! if Thou shouldst raise me to such a state that I could proclaim aloud this truth, men would believe me no more than they do others, who know how to pub-

lish this truth much better than I do; but I should, at least, give satisfaction to myself. It seems to me, however, that I should esteem my life but little, on condition that I could make one of these truths well understood; and yet I know not what I should do afterwards, for there is no trust to be placed in me. But though I am such a miserable creature, still I feel such great impulses to declare these truths to those who are in authority, that I am almost consumed thereby.

And now since I can do no more, I turn to Thee, O my Lord! to seek a remedy for all my evils; Thou knowest well how willingly I would deprive myself of all the favors Thou hast bestowed upon me (provided I might still be in a condition of never offending God), and give them up to kings and princes, for then I know it would be quite impossible for them, either to consent that those things should be done which are now permitted, or that they would fail to receive extraordinary favors from Thy hands. O my God! make them understand what these duties are, since Thou wert pleased to honor them in such a manner on earth, that I have heard there were signs in the heavens when they died. When I think of this, it excites devotion in me, and mayest Thou be pleased, O my King! to make them hereby understand, that they ought to imitate Thee in their life, since there are in some manner signs in the heavens at their death, as there were at thine own death. I am presuming to say too much, and your Reverence may tear in pieces what I am writing if I do not speak properly. Believe me, I would be glad to speak better if I were in their presence, and if I knew *how*; and especially if I thought they would believe me, for I frequently recommend them to God, and I wish to do them good. He who ventures his life may do anything, and I often desire to lose mine; and that would be venturing little to gain so much, because we cannot live in this world when we see with our own eyes the great error and blindness in which men walk.

When a soul has arrived at this state, she has not mere desires for the glory of God; His Majesty gives her strength to execute them also. No difficulty can be imagined which she would not willingly embrace, provided she could serve

Him thereby; and she thinks she does nothing, because everything which does not please God appears to her to be a mere nothing. But my grief is, that these occasions of serving Him are not offered to those who are as useless as I am. But be Thou pleased, O my Eternal Good! that some time may come wherein I shall be able to repay Thee, even but a trifle, for all that I owe Thee. Order things as Thou pleasest, provided this Thy servant may be able to serve Thee in something. There have been other women who have performed heroic actions for the love of Thee; but I am good for nothing but to talk; and so it is not Thy will that I should act, but that all the service I am to do for Thee is to consist in words and desires; and even in these I have not liberty, because I might perhaps fail in every duty. Strengthen my soul, and dispose of it first, O Thou author of all blessings! my Jesus! and then ordain things in such a way that I may be able to do something for Thee; and that no one in the world may endure to have received so much, and yet to have returned so little. No matter what it cost, O Lord! let not my hands appear so empty in Thy presence, since according to our works so shall we be rewarded. Behold! here is my life, here is my honor, here is my will; I have given all to Thee; I am Thine, and dispose of me as Thou pleasest. I know well, O Lord! how little I am able to do; but having now come to Thee, having reached that tower where so many truths are discovered, there is nothing which I shall not be able to perform, if Thou depart not from me. But if Thou withdraw Thyself (however little), I shall find myself where I once was—on the road to hell.

Oh! what an affliction is it for a soul, who sees herself in this state, to be obliged to return and converse with the world, and to behold the farce of this life so badly acted and arranged! To be forced to spend so much time in the things of the body, in sleeping and eating! All this wearies the soul, which knows not how to escape from thence, for she finds herself a captive in chains. She then feels more sensibly the captivity we endure by means of our bodies, and also the misery of this life. Then she understands what reason St. Paul had, in beseeching God to free him “from

the body of this death ;” as I have said before, the soul cries aloud with him, and begs liberty from God. But this is often done with such great impetuosity, that the soul seems desirous of leaping from the body in search of this liberty ; and as she cannot be freed, she seems like one sold as a slave in a strange land. But that which afflicts her the most is, that she cannot find many to lament with her, and to desire what she desires, for they generally desire to *live* Oh ! that we were not tied to anything, and that we did not place our happiness in the pleasures of this world ! Then would the pain we might feel of always living without God, temper the fear of death, through the desire of enjoying eternal life. Sometimes, when I am considering, how such a creature as I am, to whom our Lord has given this light, and though possessing such imperfect charity, and so little true repose (because my actions have deserved no better), should yet often feel so much pain in seeing myself in this land of exile, then I ask myself, what must have been the feelings and sentiments of the saints ? What must St. Paul and St. Mary Magdalen, and others like them, have felt, in whom the fire of divine love burnt so brightly ? It must have been a continual martyrdom for them. It seems that no one could give me greater comfort and ease, than to converse with those persons in whom I could find the like desires—I mean, desires with actions ; for there are certain persons who, in their own opinion, are disengaged from all things, and so they publish it to the world ; and it is proper they should be so, because their state of life requires such, as well as the many years since they began to enter on the way of perfection. But my soul knows well what a great difference there is between those who desire merely in words, and those who confirm their words *by deeds* ; and she also understands well, how little is the good the former do, and how great is that which the others accomplish : he who has any experience, can see this truth very clearly.

And now I have mentioned the effects which those raptures produce, that come from the Spirit of God. It is true ✓ that the effects are sometimes great, sometimes less ; I say “less,” because though in the beginning the raptures produce these effects, yet, as they are not confirmed by works.

✓ we cannot be certain if they are raptures ; and, besides, the more we endeavor to free ourselves from every imperfection, the more we shall increase in perfection ; but this requires some time ; and the more humility and divine love increase in the soul, so much the sweeter will be the odor those flowers of virtue will be sure to give, both to those who practice these virtues and to others also. It is true, that our Lord knows how to work on a soul in these raptures in such a manner, that little work will remain for the soul herself to do, in acquiring perfection ; for no one can believe unless he has experienced it, how much it pleases our Lord to bestow favors upon a soul in such a state ; nor can we, in my opinion, attain such a state by any diligence on our part. I say not but that, by the help of our Lord, such persons who make use for many years of those means which are prescribed by those who write concerning the beginnings and method of prayer, may arrive at perfection, and become entirely disengaged from all things : but this will cost much labor and some time. But in raptures, our Lord works without any labor on our part ; and He expressly draws the soul from the earth, and gives her dominion over all things therein, though there might not be in this soul any more merit than there was in mine : I do not know how to express this point sufficiently strong, for in mine there was hardly any merit at all. If the question should be asked, *why* His Majesty does so, the answer is, because it is His will, and He acts how He pleases ; and even though there should be no disposition in her at all, still He disposes her for receiving from His Majesty the blessing which He gives her : but not always does He grant these effects, because the gardener may have deserved them by having cultivated his garden well ; though, at the same time, it is certain, that whoever does this properly, and endeavors to untie himself from all things, will be favored with many blessings. But sometimes He is pleased to show His greatness upon the most barren soil (as I have mentioned before), and to prepare it for receiving every good thing, so that now the soul seems to have no power, in a certain sense, of relapsing into the offences she used to commit against God.

She has her thoughts so accustomed to understand what

is truth, indeed, that everything else seems to her but the playthings of children. Sometimes she smiles within herself, when she sees grave persons, who are given to prayer and other religious duties, make much of points of honor, which this soul tramples under her feet. Some may say, this is prudence, and upholding the authority of their state, that so they may be able to do more good. But this soul knows very well, that such persons might have done more good in *one* day, if they would have yielded up their authority for the love of God, than they would ever do in ten years by adhering to it. Thus does the soul lead a troublesome life, and always she has a cross. But she goes on advancing: though those with whom she converses may suppose that she has already arrived at the top of perfection, yet very soon they discover that she goes on improving, because our Lord continues to caress her more and more. God himself is her soul, and He it is who has taken the charge of her into His own hands; and there He shines, and seems in a clear manner to be guarding her, that she may not offend Him, and also to be caressing her and exciting her to serve Him. When my soul arrived so far, that God was pleased to do me so great a favor, my miseries ceased at once, and God gave me strength to avoid them; and I was no more affected by being afterwards in those occasions, and in the company of persons who formerly distracted me, than if I had not been in them at all; rather was I helped thereby. That which used before to injure me, now became instrumental in making me know God better, and loving Him more, and likewise in making me see how greatly I was indebted to Him, and how sorry I should be for having offended Him.

But I knew well that this blessing did not come from me, and that I had not obtained it by any diligence on my part, nor indeed had I even time for it; but that His Majesty had given me strength for this purpose through His sole goodness. From the time when our Lord began to do me this favor of having raptures, my strength went on increasing; and He has also held me fast by the hand, that so I might not return back any more. And now, methinks, it is nothing at all which I do on my part, but I understand very clearly that it is our Lord who does all; and therefore do I think

that the soul on which our Lord confers these favors (provided she acknowledge with humility and fear that it is our Lord who gives them, and that we ourselves do nothing at all), may place herself in any company; and that, however distracted or evil it may be, it will not affect her or move her in any way, but rather will it help her, and give her the means of reaping more profit thereby. Such are already strong souls, whom our Lord chooses to do good to others, though this strength comes not from themselves. But when once our Lord brings a soul near Himself, by little and little He communicates great secrets to her. In this ecstasy come true revelations, and great favors and visions; and all these tend to humble and strengthen the soul, and to enable her to despise the things of this life, and to know more clearly the greatness of that reward which our Lord has prepared for those who serve Him.

May our Lord grant that the excessive goodness which He has been pleased to show such a miserable sinner, may be in some way instrumental in strengthening and animating those who shall read this discourse, completely to abandon all things for God's sake, since His Majesty gives such abundant rewards. And we see clearly, even in this life, what rewards and advantages He gives to those who love Him; and, if so, what will He not give them in the next?

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SAINT SHOWS HOW SECURE A WAY IT IS FOR THOSE WHO GIVE THEMSELVES TO CONTEMPLATION, NOT TO RAISE THEIR MINDS TO HIGH THINGS UNLESS OUR LORD RAISE THEM HIMSELF, AND HOW THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST MAY SERVE AS A MEANS OF REACHING THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF CONTEMPLATION.

I WISH to make a remark here which, in my opinion, is very important; and if your Reverence consider it proper, it may serve as a word of advice to you; and, perhaps, you may even stand in need of it. I have read in some books which treat of prayer, that though the soul is not able of herself to arrive at this state, because everything is super-

natural which our Lord works therein, yet that she may help herself towards this object, by raising her mind above all created things : and that so raising it with humility for many years, and having first passed through the "purgative" way, and then through the illuminative (I do not know why it is called by this name), the writers particularly advise persons to abstract themselves from all reflection on corporeal things, that so they may be able to arrive at the contemplation of the divinity. They say, that though it should be even the Humanity of Christ, yet it is some impediment for those who have advanced so far, and that it hinders persons from applying to the most perfect kind of contemplation. To support this opinion, they allege what our Lord said to His apostles, when He was ascending into heaven, respecting the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them. My opinion is, that if then they had that lively faith of our Lord being both God and man—(as they had after the coming of the Holy Spirit), His corporal presence would have been no hinderance to them ; for He spoke not thus to His mother, though she loved Him much more than all of them together. But they quote what our Lord said to His apostles, when He ascended into heaven, because it seems to them (as all the action is spiritual), that every corporeal object will prove a hinderance and obstacle to this kind of prayer ; that they should consider themselves independent of creatures ; that God surrounds them on all sides, and hence, that it should be their endeavor to see themselves engulfed in Him. To make use of this sometimes seems to me good : but to separate ourselves entirely from Christ, and to place His divine body in the same company with our miseries, or even with all created things, this I can by no means allow. May His Majesty grant that I may make myself understood. I do not wish to contradict these men, because they are spiritual and learned, and they know well what they say : it is also true, that God conducts souls through several ways and paths, as He did mine. And now I will declare some particulars thereof (in other matters I will not interfere) ; but I will only speak of the danger in which I found myself, because I acted conformably to what I read. I firmly believe, that whoever shall have arrived at the state of union, and not have passed

further on, so as to have raptures and visions, and those other favors our Lord communicates to souls, may consider that which is mentioned above to be better, as I did. But if I had continued in that state, I believe I never should have arrived to where I am now, because, in my opinion, it is an error; though perhaps I myself may be deceived, but yet I will relate what happened to me.

When I had no director, and was engaged in reading those books alluded to above, I thought that by little and little I came to understand something; but I afterwards found out, that if our Lord had not been my teacher, I should have learnt very little by these books. It was a mere nothing which I understood, till His Majesty was pleased to make me know it by experience; neither did I know what I was doing. But when I began to understand a little about supernatural prayer (I mean the prayer of Quiet), I endeavored to avoid all corporeal objects, though I dared not exalt my soul; for knowing how very wicked I always was, I saw that this would be great presumption in me. But it seemed to me that I felt the presence of God, as indeed I did, and I endeavored to keep myself recollected with Him. This is a sweet kind of prayer, if our Lord assist a soul therein, and the delight is very great; and when both the profit and the pleasure are perceived, no one could then make me return to the Humanity of Christ, because I thought that it was in reality an impediment to me. O Lord of my soul! my Good! Jesus Christ crucified! I never call to mind the opinion which I then held, without feeling pain at the thought, for I think I committed a great treason against Thee, though perhaps in ignorance. I have been especially devoted to the Passion of Christ throughout all my life, for this other circumstance happened in the latter part of it; I say, "in the latter part," before our Lord granted me the favor of having raptures and visions. I remained but a short time in this opinion, and then I always returned to regale myself with my Lord; and especially when I received the most blessed Sacrament, I always desired to have some picture or image of Him near my eyes, since I was not able to have Him as deeply engraven on my soul as I could wish. But is it possible, O my Lord! a thought should ever have entered

my mind, even for an hour, that Thou couldst be a hinderance to me in obtaining my greatest good? Whence have come all the blessings I have received, but from Thee? But I will not think I was in fault in this respect; rather I ought to pity myself for that which certainly proceeded from ignorance; and so Thou wert pleased in Thy goodness to remedy it, by giving me a person who delivered me from this error, and also by enabling me to see Thee so often, as I shall afterwards declare, that so I might the more clearly understand how great that ignorance of mine was; and likewise that I might declare the same to many persons, as I have already done, and declare it here also. I believe that the cause why many souls do not advance more, nor attain great liberty of soul when they arrive at the prayer of Union, is on this very account.

There are two reasons on which, it seems to me, this opinion may be grounded. And though what I am going to say may be of little or no importance, yet I will declare it, because I have found by experience, that my soul was not at all in a proper state till our Lord was pleased to give me light. For all those joys which she received came to me only by draughts; and when these were over, I did not find myself in such company, nor possessed of such strength to endure tribulations and temptations as I found afterwards. The first reason is, that there is a little want of humility, which, however, lies hidden in such a manner that it is not perceived by the person. And who will be so proud and miserable as I was, even though he should have passed his whole life in numerous acts of penance, in prayers, and all imaginable persecutions, as not even then to consider himself very rich, and very well repaid, were our Lord to allow him to stand at the foot of the cross with St. John? No one but myself could help being content with such a happiness as this, for I was a loser many ways in all those things in which I ought to have been a gainer. But if our frail nature, or our infirmities, will not allow us always to be meditating on the Passion (on account of its painfulness), what should prevent us from remaining with Him now that He is risen again to glory, since we have Him so near us in the Blessed Sacrament? Nor need we behold Him there so afflicted,

torn in pieces, covered with blood, so weary going along those rugged ways, so persecuted by those to whom He did such good, and even not believed in by His own apostles : because it is true that no one can bear always to be meditating on all the sufferings which He endured. But in the Blessed Sacrament we have Him without His enduring any pain, and full of glory, giving strength to some and courage to others, just as He did before He ascended into heaven. Here, in this most adorable Sacrament, He is our companion, and it seems as if it were not in His power to absent Himself one moment from us ; and yet I was able to remove myself from Thee, under the pretext of serving Thee better ! But when I was offending Thee, I knew Thee not : and when I *did* know Thee, how could I think of gaining by the way I walked ? Oh ! what a rugged road I walked along ! And now I find I should have quite lost my way, if Thou hadst not conducted me back to Thee ; for as Thou wert near me, I saw I had all good things. And whenever any affliction comes upon me I consider how Thou wert treated before the Jews, and then the affliction is very easily borne. With the presence of so good a friend, and under the guidance of so valiant a captain, who was in the foremost rank to suffer, everything can be endured for His sake. He assists us and gives us strength, and never fails in his promises : He is a true friend. I see clearly, that in order to please God, and to receive great favors from Him, He wishes to give them to us through the hands of this most sacred Humanity, in which His Majesty has said, He is “ well pleased.” Many, many times, I have known this truth by experience : besides, our Lord himself has told me so. I have also seen, that by this gate we must enter, if we wish His Sovereign Majesty to communicate great secrets to our souls.

Thus it is that I wish your Reverence not to choose any other way, though you should have arrived at the very height of contemplation ; for here you will be safe, since this is our Lord, from whom all blessings come : if you consider His life, your own will be improved, for He is the very best pattern we can have. What can we desire more than to have so good a friend by our side, who will never desert us in our afflictions and tribulations, like men in the world do ?

Blessed is that man who loves our Lord truly, and who always has Him near to him. Let us consider the glorious St. Paul, who had the name of Jesus continually on his lips, because he had it deeply engraven in his heart. And from the time I have known this truth, I have carefully considered the life of many other great contemplative saints, and I have noticed that they walked along no other way. St. Francis shows this clearly by his wounds ("stigmata"); and St. Antony of Padua by the infant. St. Bernard took great delight in the humanity of our Lord; so also did St. Catherine of Sienna, and many other saints, with whom your Reverence is better acquainted than I am. This abstraction from corporeal objects must be good, since persons of such spirituality tell us so; but, in my opinion, what they say must be understood of souls very far advanced in perfection; for till then it is evident that the Creator must be sought for by means of creatures. But I will not say much on this point, since all depends on the favors our Lord is pleased to show to any soul. What I wish to be understood is, that the most sacred Humanity of Christ must not be taken into this account; and let this point be well understood, that I would wish to know how to express myself properly.

When God is pleased to suspend all the powers of the soul, as He does in those kinds of prayer already mentioned, we have seen plainly that this presence is taken away from us, whether we will or no. But let it go; for what a happy loss is that whereby we gain more than what we thought we had lost! Then the whole soul is employed in loving Him whom the understanding has already endeavored to know; and she loves that which she did not comprehend, and enjoys what she could not have enjoyed, except only by losing herself for her greater gain, as I have already mentioned. But that we should accustom ourselves, by a kind of artifice, not to endeavor with all our strength to place always before our eyes—(and would it were *always*)—this most sacred Humanity: this, I repeat, is what I do not like, for it is as if the soul walked in the air, as the saying is, because she seems to have no support, however much she may fancy herself to be full of God.

Since we are mortal, it is very important for us as long as

we live to represent our Lord's Humanity to our mind ; for this is that other subject on which I wish to speak. The first (I said) proceeded from a want of a little humility, by presuming to raise the soul up before our Lord raised her ; and not contenting herself with meditating on a subject so precious and sacred, she wishes to be Mary before she has labored with Martha. If our Lord should wish her to be Mary, we have nothing to fear then, though it should happen on the very first day of our entering His service. But let us consider the subject well, as I think I have mentioned before. This mote of little humility, though it may appear to be a mere nothing, will hinder us a great deal from advancing in contemplation.

Let us return now to the second point. Though we are not angels, but have bodies, yet to desire to make ourselves angels, while we are still upon the earth, is a kind of madness. But our thoughts require some support, generally speaking, though sometimes the soul may be so raised above herself, and often so full of God, as not to stand in need of any created object in order to recollect herself. But this is not so common when the soul is overpowered with business, or in persecutions and troubles, when she cannot have so much quiet ; and in times also of dryness and dulness, Christ our Lord is found to be a very good friend, because we consider Him as man, and we behold Him full of weakness and afflictions, and there He keeps us company ; and when once we acquire the custom, we shall find it very easy to keep Him close to us, though it will sometimes happen that we shall not be able to do either the one or the other. For this reason it will be well to do what I mentioned before, viz., not to strive to procure any consolation of soul, come what may ; but willingly to embrace the cross of Christ, is very important. Our Lord was deprived of all consolation : He was left alone in his afflictions : let us not leave Him so. He will stretch out His hand to us, which will raise us up better than all our own endeavors ; and yet He will absent Himself also whenever He shall think fit, and will raise the soul above herself when He wishes, as I have already mentioned.

God is much pleased to see a soul take, with humility,

His Son for her intercessor ; and He loves her so much, that even if His Majesty should desire to raise her up to a very high degree of contemplation, she acknowledges herself unworthy, and exclaims with St. Peter, "Depart from me, O Lord! for I am a sinful man." This I have experienced myself, and in this manner has God guided my soul. Let others go (as I have said) by another short cut ; but what I have learnt is, that all this edifice of prayer is grounded on humility ; and that the more the soul humbles herself in prayer, the more does God exalt her. I do not remember that He ever showed any of those singular favors (of which I shall speak hereafter)—but only when I was in confusion at seeing myself so wicked : and His Majesty sometimes took care to make me understand certain things, which I never could have imagined myself, in order to help me to know myself better. I believe that when the soul does anything on her part to help herself on in this prayer of Union, yet the building will very quickly fall (though for the present her efforts may seem to advance her), because it has no solid foundation. And I am afraid she will never arrive at true poverty of spirit, which consists not in seeking comfort and pleasure in prayer (for the pleasures of this world are already forsaken), but consolation in afflictions, for the love of Him who always lived in them, and grace to remain patient under them, as well as quiet in aridities ; and though such souls cannot help feeling some pain thereat, yet they do not disturb themselves so much as some persons do, who imagine that if they are not always working with the understanding, and do not have sensible devotion, all is lost ! As if they could merit so great a blessing by their own exertions ! I do not mean to say, that they should not endeavor with care to keep themselves in the presence of God ; but if they should be unable to have even one good thought (as I have mentioned in another place), yet they must not torment themselves. We are unprofitable servants, and what therefore can we fancy we are able to do ? Our Lord is much better pleased that we should know this truth, and that we should consider ourselves only fit to be treated like some poor little asses, to turn the wheel for drawing the water spoken of before ; for though these have their eyes

blindfolded, and know not what they are doing, yet they draw up more water than the gardener can, with all his strength and exertions. We must walk in this way with liberty, and put ourselves in the hands of God. If His Majesty shall be pleased to rank us among the number of His confidential friends, we must accept the honor with a good will; but if not, we must be content to serve in inferior employments, and not sit down in the best place, as I have said elsewhere. God takes *more* care of us than we do ourselves, and knows what every one is fit for; what use then is it for him, who has already given his whole will to God, to govern himself? In my opinion, this is less to be allowed here than in the first degree of prayer, and it does us much more harm (if any error be committed), for these are supernatural blessings. If a man have a bad voice, however much he may force himself to sing, the voice will not thereby become good; but if God should please to give him a good voice, he need not torment himself. Let us, therefore, always beg of God to grant us His favors; and let the soul be resigned, though yet confiding in the greatness of God. And when she has received leave to remain at the feet of Christ, let her continue there in whatever way she can: let her imitate Mary Magdalen; and when she becomes strong, our Lord will take her into the desert.

Your Reverence will do well to keep yourself in this way, until you meet with some one else who has more experience than I have in this matter. If they be persons who are only beginning to delight in God, do not believe them, for they think they receive more profit and delight when they help themselves. Oh! how manifestly does God show His power, when He wills, without these poor helps! And so, whatever resistance we may make, He carries away the soul, just as some giant would carry away a straw. What an incredible thing would it be for a man to believe and to hope, that a toad could fly whenever it liked! Now I consider it to be a more difficult and absurd thing for our soul to raise herself up, without being raised by God, because it is laden with earth, and hindered by a thousand obstacles; and merely wishing to fly will be of little use to her. And though flying be more natural to a soul than to a toad, yet the soul is

so deeply buried in mire, that she has lost the power of flying by her own fault.

I wish then to conclude with this remark, that whenever we meditate on Christ our Lord, we should ever remember the love wherewith He bestowed so many favors upon us, and how great that love was by His giving us such a pledge of it; for love produces love. And though we should be mere beginners, and withal very wicked, yet let us always be endeavoring to consider what I have been saying, and be exciting ourselves to love Him. If once our Lord shall be pleased to do us the favor of imprinting this love in our hearts, everything will become easy to us, and very quickly shall we begin to work, and this without any trouble. May His Majesty grant us this favor, since He knows how necessary it is for us; and we beg this favor by the great love He bore us, and for the sake of His divine Son, who also loved us so much to His own cost. Amen.

One thing I would fain ask your Reverence, viz., how our Lord, when He begins to confer such high favors on a soul, as to raise her to a state of perfect contemplation—(and this soul ought then most certainly to become perfect entirely and immediately, since a soul which receives such great favors should no longer desire the consolations of this world)—how our Lord can in process of time abandon this soul, without maintaining her in the perfection of virtue, especially after she has received raptures and been accustomed to receive other favors; for the more she becomes disengaged from creatures, the more highly is she favored, considering, too, how when our Lord enters a soul He can sanctify her in a moment? This I desire to know, for I do not understand it, though I know well there is a difference between the strength which these raptures give in the beginning, when they continue only for the twinkling of an eye, and between the strength which the soul receives when they continue longer. But the doubt often occurs to me, whether the cause of this may not be, that the soul does not give herself up entirely to God, till His Majesty leads her little by little, and makes her determine at once, and gives her the strength of a full-grown man, that so she may trample everything under her feet, just as Mary Magdalen did so quickly. And

so does He do to others, in proportion as they co-operate with Him, and as they allow His Majesty to dispose of them according to His own good pleasure ; for we cannot but believe, that even in this life God rewards us a hundredfold.

I thought also of this comparison : that supposing what is given to beginners as well as to proficients be all the same, it is like a delicious viand whereof many persons eat ; that they who eat little retain the sweet taste of it only for a short time, and they who eat more are enabled to subsist, but that they who feed plentifully on it receive life and strength. A soul may even feed so often and so fully on this food of life, as to have no relish at all for anything but that food, because she derives great benefit therefrom. Her taste also is so accustomed to this sweetness, that she would rather cease to exist than feed on other things, all of which would only serve to take away the good taste which the former food left on her lips. Besides, the conversation and company of a holy person does not do us so much good in one day as in many ; but we may, by the Divine assistance, become like unto Him by remaining long with Him. Finally, the chief point depends upon God, to whom and when He is pleased to give His graces : but it is important to remember, that he who begins to receive this favor must resolve to disengage himself from everything, and to esteem the favors of our Lord as highly as they deserve.

It also seems to me as if His Majesty were resolved to try who they are that love Him—whether this soul or that : and that He likewise wishes to discover who He is Himself, by giving us such excessive delights to quicken our faith, if it should be dead or weak, about those blessings He intends to give the soul ; and He says : “ Behold ! this is but a drop of that immense ocean of blessing which I mean to give to those that love Me.” And when He sees that we receive them as He gives them, He then gives us Himself. He loves those who love Him : and what a good friend, and who more worthy to be loved ! O Lord of my soul ! who will give me words that I might make men understand what Thou dost give to those who trust in Thee, and what they lose who arrive at this state and yet remain attached to themselves ? Do not permit this, O Lord ! since Thou dost so much in

coming to so wicked a place as my heart. Be Thou blessed forever and ever.

And now I wish to entreat your Reverence, that should you mention these matters on prayer, concerning which I have written, you would do so only to spiritual persons; because if they understand only one way, or have remained stationary half-way, they cannot judge correctly. There are some whom God quickly raises to a very sublime degree, and they may think that others also might arrive there, and keep the understanding quiet, without making use of corporeal objects as means; such persons, however, will remain as dry as a stick. And some who have enjoyed a little the Prayer of Quiet, presently imagine, that as they have reached one degree they may reach the other; but these, instead of advancing, go backwards, as I have mentioned before. Thus, in all these matters both experience and prudence are necessary; and may our Lord in his goodness grant them to us.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SAINT RESUMES THE HISTORY OF HER LIFE, AND TELLS US HOW SHE BEGAN TO AIM AT GREATER PERFECTION, AND THE MEANS SHE EMPLOYED FOR THIS PURPOSE.

I NOW wish to return to the place where I left off speaking of my life;* for I have dwelt on other matters longer I think than I ought, in order that what is now to follow may be the better understood. Henceforth this will be another new book: I mean, another new life. Hitherto it was my life: but since I began to explain these points respecting prayer, the life I have lived since then is that when God lived in me, as far as seemed to me; because otherwise I consider it impossible for me to have left off, in so short a time, such evil customs and actions. May our Lord be praised for having delivered me from myself. When I began to avoid the occasions of sin, and to give myself more to

* The Saint left off the history of her life at the eleventh chapter.

prayer, our Lord began also to confer favors upon me, as one who desired I should be willing to receive them. His Majesty then began to give me very commonly the Prayer of Quiet, and often that of Union, which continued a very long time. But when I learnt, that at this time there happened great illusions and deceits to certain women, which came from the devil, I began to be afraid, considering what great delight and sweetness I felt, and that often I could not avoid such things; though on the other side I saw in me cause for very great security, viz., that all came from God, especially when I was in prayer. I saw also that I was much improved by these favors, and acquired much greater strength. But when a little distraction came upon me, I began to fear again whether the devil might not be desirous of making me imagine that it were good to suspend the understanding, and so deprive myself of the exercise of mental prayer, and that I might not be able to meditate on the "Passion," nor make use of my understanding; and this seemed a great loss to me. But as His Majesty was now pleased to give me light, in order that I might no more offend Him, and might see how much I was indebted to Him, this fear increased on me in such a manner as to make me diligently search for some spiritual persons with whom I could speak on the affairs of my soul. Already I had heard of some; for some fathers of the Society of Jesus had come into Spain,* and for this Order I had great regard, without, however, knowing any of the fathers, but for the sole reason of my knowing the kind of life and prayer they practiced. But I did not consider myself worthy to speak with them, nor strong enough to obey them; and this gave me great fear, because to treat with them on spiritual matters, and yet to remain as I was, seemed to me very foolish and wrong.

Amidst such thoughts as these I passed some time, till at last by the contest I endured inwardly, and through my fears which I still had, I resolved to state my case to a spiritual man, to ask him what he thought of the kind of prayer I used, and to enlighten me if he found I was in

* The Fathers of the Society came into Spain about the year 1553.— See Vol. VII. of the Bollandists.

error: I also resolved to use all possible diligence not to offend God. Through my want of courage I became more and more timid. O my God! what a great error it was in me to separate myself from my God, in order to become good! In this point the devil labors much, when we are beginning to acquire virtue, because I could not conquer myself herein. He (the devil) knows well, that the sovereign means of doing good to a soul, is to seek advice from those who are the friends of God; and thus I could not fix on any time to resolve upon this. I expected to reform myself first, as I had done before when I left off prayer, and perhaps I should never have accomplished my object, for I had already fallen so deeply into certain bad habits (which I did not know were evil), that it was necessary for me to be assisted by some one else, in order to raise me up. Blessed be our Lord, for His own hand was the first to help me.

When I now perceived my fears to increase so much, because I was more given to prayer, it seemed to me, that there was either some great good, or some very great evil involved in my case, because I was already well aware that my prayer was supernatural, since sometimes I was not able to resist it, and even when I wished to obtain it, I could not. I accordingly thought that there would be no remedy for me, if I did not endeavor to keep a pure conscience, and to avoid every occasion of sin, even venial ones. If my prayer came from the Spirit of God, the benefit would be evident; but if from the devil, he could do me no hurt at all, but rather he would suffer loss, if I endeavored to please God and not to offend Him. Having resolved upon this, and always beseeching our Lord to assist me, though I continued this same course for several days, yet I found my soul had not strength enough to arrive at such perfection of herself, on account of some affection and inclination I still had for certain things, which though not very bad in themselves, yet were sufficient to spoil everything.

A certain priest in this place was mentioned to me, who was a learned man, and whose virtue and good life our Lord began to discover to the public; I accordingly endeavored to become acquainted with this ecclesiastic, by means of a holy individual who lived in the same town. This gentle-

man was married ; but his life was so exemplary and virtuous, and so charitable was he and given to prayer, that all men admired his goodness and perfection ; and with reason, because many souls obtained great good through his means, and by the excellent abilities he had ; for though they did not assist him in increasing his fortune, still he did not refuse to employ them for the good of others. He had an excellent understanding, and was mild and kind to every one ; his conversation was not troublesome, but so sweet and agreeable, as well as just and holy, that every one was delighted who spoke to him ; he directed all things for the greater good of those souls with whom he conversed ; and, indeed, he seemed to have no other aim or desire, but to give pleasure to every one, and to do all for them that they allowed him. Now I do believe that this holy and blessed man, by his care and attention, was chiefly instrumental in the salvation of my soul. I am astonished at his humility in wishing to see me, for I think he had spent little less than forty years in the practice of mental prayer (perhaps not quite so long by two or three years), and he led a life of perfection, such as his station seemed to allow. His wife was also a great servant of God, and so charitable, that he lost nothing by her. In fine, he chose her for his wife as being one whom God knew to be fit for so great a servant of His. Some of his kindred were married to some relations of mine. I was likewise well acquainted with another great servant of God, who was married to a cousin of mine ; and by means of this person, I managed that this priest, who was his great friend, and such a great servant of God likewise, should come and speak with me, for I intended to make my confession to him, and take him for my director. The gentleman then before mentioned, having introduced him to me, I was extremely confused to see myself in the presence of so holy a man : I gave him, however, an account of my life and prayer, for he excused himself from hearing my confession, saying, “ that he was then very busy,” and so he was. He began with a holy resolution to guide me, as he would one who was strong, and I ought to have been so (considering the kind of prayer I believed I was using) ; and this he did that I might not offend God in any way whatever. But I was much troubled when

I so soon perceived what his resolution was with regard to those little practices which, as I have said, I had not the courage to leave off immediately in a perfect manner: and when I also saw that he meant to settle the affairs of my soul as it were all at once, then I was convinced that I stood in need of much more care and consideration. In a word, I clearly understood that the means he prescribed were not those which would supply a remedy, for they were only fit for a more perfect soul than mine. And though, as regards myself, I had advanced by having received favors from God, yet I was but just beginning to acquire virtue and mortification. And I certainly believe, that if I had had no one else to consult with but this person, my soul would never have improved; because, through the affliction it gave me to see how I did not and could not (as I thought) do that which he told me, it was enough to make me despair and give up everything. Sometimes I wonder that as this holy priest had a particular facility in winning souls to God, His Majesty was not pleased to give him a knowledge of my soul, nor to allow him to take the care of it. But I now see that all this happened for my greater good, that so I might come to know and converse with such holy men as they are who belong to the Society of Jesus.

In the mean time I made an agreement with the saintly gentleman of whom I spoke, that now and then he should come and visit me: herein I discovered his great humility, since he was pleased to converse with such a wicked creature as myself. He accordingly began to visit me and encourage me; and he told me, that I must not think of delivering myself from all my imperfections in one day, but that God would do it by little and little; and that He himself had been whole years in correcting some very little faults, not having been able to do the work sooner. O Humility! what great blessings dost thou bestow on those with whom thou remainest, and even upon those who only approach the possessors of it! This saint (and, in my opinion, I may well give him this name) related certain things to me, which, through his humility, seemed weaknesses to him, but he did so for my cure: considering his state of life, they were neither faults nor imperfections; but

for me, it was a very great fault to be subject to them. I do not speak thus without a reason, though perhaps I enlarge too much about those little trifles; but they are so important for enabling a soul to gain profit, and for teaching her to fly, though she may scarcely have any feathers (as the saying is), that no one who has not had experience thereof, will believe what I say. I mention these things here, because I hope in God that your Reverence will derive profit from them; for all my health consisted in discovering the means of curing myself, and in my director's exercising humility and charity towards me, and bearing patiently with me for not correcting myself entirely and immediately. I began to conceive so high a regard for this priest (for he used great discretion, and this by little and little, and showed me the way to overcome the devil), that I could not experience greater comfort than when I saw him, though it was but seldom. When he delayed his visits I was then much troubled, thinking that perhaps he did not come to see me because I was so wicked.

When he came to know my great imperfections (which perhaps might have been sins), and after I had spoken to him, I was much improved; and when I also mentioned to him the favors God had bestowed upon me, in order that he might enlighten me, he told me, that they did not agree with each other, and that such favors were only fit for persons who were already very far advanced, and were very mortified; that for his part he could not help being greatly afraid, because there seemed to him to be an "evil spirit" in some things, though he could not be absolutely sure such was the case; but he wished me to consider well what I knew respecting my prayer, and to relate all the circumstances to him. Now here was the difficulty; for I neither knew much, nor could I tell much, respecting the nature of my prayer, for it is only a short time ago since God granted me the favor of understanding my prayer, and knowing how to speak of it. When he spoke in this manner to me, great was my affliction, and many the tears I shed, through the fear I had; for I certainly desired to serve and please God, and I could not persuade myself that this came from the devil: I only feared, lest through my great sins, our Lord might blind me, so that I could not understand my state. Turning over one

day some books, to see if I could meet with anything concerning my prayer, I found in one, which is called "The Ascent to the Mountain" (that is, relating to the union of a soul with God), all the proofs of what I used to say so often, viz., that I could not think of anything when I was in that kind of prayer. I marked with lines those places where the passages were to be found, and then I gave him the book, that so both he himself, and the other holy priest and servant of God (of whom I have spoken), might peruse it, and tell me what I was to do, and whether it was their opinion I should give up my prayer altogether. Why should I expose myself to those dangers, if now, after having used this kind of prayer for almost twenty years, I had derived no other benefit from it than to be imposed upon by the devil? It would be better for me not to practice this prayer at all, though this would be a hard case for me, since I had already found by experience what a state my soul was in without prayer. Thus everything now seemed wretched and miserable to me; I was like one who having been cast into a river, saw more and more danger on whatever side he should go, and so was almost on the point of being drowned. This state is a very great affliction; and of such afflictions I have endured many, as I shall afterwards relate. And though what I say may seem to be of little importance, yet it may prove of some use towards understanding how a soul is to be tried. The affliction which is endured in these cases is indeed great; and much prudence is necessary, especially when men have to treat with women, for our weakness is very great; and great mischief may be done by telling us, that such and such a thing come from the devil, without at the same time considering the matter very carefully, removing us from all possible dangers, and advising us to keep things private; and it is proper that the *men themselves* should be careful in this respect. I speak on this subject as one who has had great trouble, because I could not find proper persons with whom to consult concerning my prayer; I could only ask this or that individual what he thought would be for my good; but they did me great harm. And many things have become public which ought to have remained private, since they are not fit for every one to know; and, besides, it may seem as

if they had been divulged by me. But I believe these people made such matters public without any fault on their side ; and our Lord was pleased to permit this to happen, that so I might suffer. I am far from saying that what passed between us in confession was made public. But as they were the persons to whom I gave an account of my prayer, being moved thereto by my fears, that so they might enlighten me, I think they might have kept silence. However, I never could venture to conceal anything from such persons. I say, therefore, that such souls must be discreetly advised and animated, waiting till our Lord shall help them, as He did me ; and if He had not done so, I should have suffered very great harm on account of my fears and apprehensions ; and especially considering how much I was subject to palpitation of the heart, I wonder I did not receive more injury.

When I delivered this book, and had given him an account of my life and sins as best I could, in a general way, for I did not make a confession, because he was a layman, though yet I made him understand how wicked I was ; these two servants of God considered, with great charity and love, what was proper to be done. The answer having come, which I was expecting with great fear, and having requested many persons to recommend me to God, besides praying myself during all those days with much affliction, the gentleman came to me and told me, the opinion of both of them was, that my prayer was a delusion of the devil, and that the best thing to do would be to speak on the matter to a certain father of the Society of Jesus ; for, if I would invite him to call on me, and tell him how I was situated, he would most certainly come ; that I should give him an account of my whole life by making a general confession, and explain everything with great clearness, and that then, in virtue of the sacrament of Penance, God would give him more light to guide me : that the Fathers were men of great experience in spiritual matters, and that it would be well to be careful in not departing from what they told me, for if I had no one to direct me, that I should expose myself to great danger. These words filled me with so much fear and pain, that I knew not what to do : I did nothing but weep. And being one day in an oratory full of trouble, and not knowing

what would become of me, I read in a book, which it seems our Lord put into my hands, these words of St. Paul : " God is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above our strength." I was comforted exceedingly by these words, and began to consider about making my general confession, and to put in writing all the sins and blessings, and the whole history of my life, as clearly as I knew how, without omitting anything. I remember, that when I read over what I had written, and saw how many sins I had committed, and that I had done hardly any good action, I was grieved and afflicted exceedingly. I was also troubled that the people of the house should see me conversing with such holy men as those of the Society of Jesus are, for I was afraid of my own wickedness ; and I thought I should be obliged to be wicked no more, and that I should give up my idle conversations, and that if I did not, it would be worse for me ; and so I prevailed on the portress and the sacristan not to speak to any one. But this precaution was of little use, for there happened to be one at the gate, when I was called, who published it all over the convent. But what difficulties and troubles does the devil raise against those who desire to approach near to God !

After I had spoken with this great servant of God concerning my soul, and had given him an account of my whole life, he told me what everything was as one well acquainted with this language ;* and he encouraged me much, and told me that my prayer was very evidently from the Spirit of God, but that I must return to it again, because I was not well grounded therein ; nor had I so much as begun to know what mortification was. This was very true, for it seems I hardly understood even the name. He told me also, that I must on no account give up my prayer, but rather apply more diligently thereto, since God had bestowed on me such particular favors. Who could tell (he said) whether our Lord might not be pleased to do good to many souls through your means ? Other things also he mentioned to me in such a way, that he seems to have prophesied what our Lord was pleased to do with me afterwards. And I should deserve

* That is, the language of supernatural prayer.

much blame if I corresponded not with those favors which our Lord showed me. In all things it seemed to me, that the Holy Spirit spoke by this Father for the cure of my soul, so deeply was everything he said imprinted therein. He made me greatly confused, and gave me such directions, that he seemed to change me into quite another person. So very important is it to understand a soul. He told me to meditate every day on some part of the Passion, and that I should profit much thereby; that I should dwell only on His sacred Humanity, and should resist as much as possible those recollections and caresses, and not give way to them till he should speak to me again on the subject. He left me both comforted and strengthened, and our Lord assisted both me and him, in order that he might understand my state, and how I was to be guided. I also firmly resolved not to depart in any way from what he should command me; and in this resolution I have continued till now. May our Lord be praised for having given me grace to obey my confessors, though so imperfectly; and these have almost always been those holy men belonging to the Society of Jesus, though, as I have said, I followed their advice imperfectly. But my soul began evidently to be much improved, as I will now relate.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SAINT CONTINUES THE HISTORY OF HER LIFE, AND TELLS US HOW HER SOUL WAS IMPROVED AFTER SHE BEGAN TO OBEY HER CONFESSOR.

AFTER this confession my soul became so tractable, that it seemed there could be nothing which I would not willingly embrace; and so I soon began to change in many things, though my director did not press me much, but rather seemed to make little account of everything.

This treatment had the more effect upon me, because he guided me by the method of loving God; and he gave me also more liberty, and told me I should not gain a reward unless I did everything through love. In the meantime I

continued for almost two months, using every means in my power to resist the favors and caresses of God. A change was perceptible in my outward conduct, because our Lord already began to give me courage to do certain things, which those who knew me, and especially the religious of the convent, justly believe me incapable of overcoming, considering what I was before. Still I fell short of what I was obliged to by my habit and profession. By resisting the caresses of God I gained this much—that His Majesty became my instructor; for before, it seemed that in order to dispose me for receiving caresses in prayer, I was obliged to retire, and shut myself up in a corner, as it were, so that I durst hardly stir. But afterwards I perceived how little this served my purpose; for the more I endeavored to resist, the more did our Lord cover me over, in such a way with sweetness and glory, that I seemed to be so entirely surrounded thereby, that I could not possibly escape; and so it was. I took so much pains in resisting that it was quite a trouble to me; and yet our Lord, even then, took more care to bestow favors upon me, and to express Himself much more clearly to me, during those two months, than he had formerly done, in order that I might understand the better it was no longer in my power to resist. And now I began to conceive a new kind of love for the most sacred Humanity of our Lord; and my prayer began to settle itself, like a building which has mortar in it: I also felt more inclined to do Penance, wherein I had grown careless on account of my great infirmities. But this holy man, to whom I made my confession, told me, that some penances would do me no harm; that God had perhaps afflicted me so much as a penance, since I did not wish to do any myself. He commanded me also to perform certain acts of mortification, which were not very agreeable to me; still, I performed them all, because it seemed as if our Lord himself had commanded them. His Majesty gave him grace so to direct everything in such a way, that I might be glad to obey him. Then my soul began to feel every offence, however small it might be, which I committed against God; and this to such a degree, that if I wore anything superfluous about me, I was unable to recollect myself till I had cast it off. I prayed much to our

Lord that He would protect me, and that since I conversed with His servants He would not permit me to fall back again, for I thought *that* would indeed be a great offence, and that they might lose their good name on my account.

About this time there came to Avila, Father Francis Borgia,* who had been Duke of Gandia, and who some years before had abandoned the world, and entered the Society of Jesus. My confessor, and also the gentleman (of whom I have spoken before), wished me to speak to this Father, and give him an account of my prayer, for they knew that he was already far advanced in being highly favored and caressed by God; and that as he had abandoned everything for His sake, our Lord wished to repay him even in this life. When Father Francis had heard me, he told me that my prayer came from the Spirit of God, and that it was his opinion I should no longer resist His favors, though till then he thought I had done right in doing so. He recommended me likewise always to begin my prayer by meditating on some part of the Passion, and that if afterwards our Lord should elevate my soul, I should not resist, but suffer His Majesty to carry it away, provided however I did not endeavor to procure the rapture. Being far advanced himself in this way, he gave me both medicine and advice; for in such matters experience is very important. He told me also, that it would be an error to resist any longer. These words consoled me greatly, as well as the gentleman; for he rejoiced exceedingly to hear Father Borgia say, that my prayer came from God: he always assisted me, and gave me advice as far as he could, which was very great.

About this time my confessor was ordered by his superiors to go to another place, and this circumstance troubled me much, for I thought I should become wicked again; and it seemed impossible to find another like him. My soul appeared as if dwelling in a desert, so very sad and fearful was she; I knew not what to do with myself. A relation of mine took me home with her; and I was willing to go, in order that I might find another confessor belonging to the

* See the Life of this illustrious Saint, in Alban Butler, Oct. 10. St. Francis succeeded F. Laynez (who died in 1565), as the third General of the Society.

Society. Our Lord was pleased I should then form a friendship with a certain lady, a widow of quality, and one given to prayer, who was very intimate with the Fathers of the Society. She induced me to confess to her own director, and I remained for some days in her house, for she lived near me. I was delighted to be able often to converse with those Fathers, for the mere knowledge of the sanctity of their conversation was a great advantage which my soul experienced. This Father began to put me in the way of greater perfection, telling me that I should omit doing nothing, that so I might give the greatest pleasure to God. This he told me with great prudence and sweetness, for my soul was not yet strong in anything, but very tender, especially in giving up certain friendships which I had then formed; for though I did not thereby offend God, yet the affection I had for the persons was very great, and it seemed ungrateful in me to break off their friendship; and so I told him, that since our Lord was not offended, why should I become ungrateful? He replied, "I should do well to recommend the matter to God for some days, and to recite the hymn 'Veni Creator,' that so the Holy Ghost might enlighten me to do what was the best." Having then one day prayed a long time, and humbly besought our Lord to help me to please Him in all things, I began to recite the hymn; and while I was saying it, a rapture came on me so suddenly that I almost lost myself. And of this I could not doubt, for it was very evident; and it was also the very first time our Lord gave me the favor of a rapture: then I heard these words: "I do not wish you to converse with men, but-with angels." I was much amazed at this occurrence, for the commotion of my soul was great; and these words were spoken to me in the very interior of my heart, so that they made me afraid, though, on the other hand, they gave me great consolation, which remained with me after my fears had left me; and this fear had, in my opinion, produced the strange novelty.

These words have been strictly accomplished; for never afterwards have I been able to form any friendship, nor to feel any consolation, or particular love for any one, except for those persons who I knew adhered to God and endeavored to serve Him. Nor is it now in my power, neither does

it matter whether any of these be friends or relations; for if I find that this or that person is not a servant of God, and not given to prayer, it is a heavy cross for me to speak with him. This is the very truth, as far as I can judge. From that day I have remained full of courage and resolution to abandon all things for God, as if He had been pleased in that moment (and it seemed to be no more than a moment) to make His servant become quite another creature. Thus there was no longer any necessity to command me in this respect, for when my confessor found me so determined, he did not venture expressly to tell me I should do it. He waited till our Lord should be pleased to do it Himself, as He did indeed. And never did I imagine I should succeed; for already I had used some endeavors for this purpose, and so great was the affliction I endured, that I resolved to give up the attempt, as being inconvenient to continue. But now our Lord gave me both liberty and power to put it in execution. This circumstance I told to my confessor, and I gave up everything according as I had been commanded. It did him no little good, whom I had consulted, to behold what a resolution I had taken. May God be praised forever, who gave me in a moment that power and liberty which before I had not been able to procure with all the diligence I had used for many years; for I had so often exerted all my strength, that my health was thereby considerably injured. But as He has accomplished it, who is all-powerful and truly the Lord of all things, I now suffer no pain whatever.

CHAPTER XXV.

SHE TREATS OF THE WAY HOW THOSE WORDS AND SPEECHES ARE TO BE UNDERSTOOD, WHICH GOD COMMUNICATES TO THE SOUL WITHOUT ANY VOICE OR SOUND BEING HEARD.

I THINK it would be well to explain here what kind of speech that is which God makes use of to the soul, and what she feels, that so your Reverence may understand it; for from the time when our Lord did me this favor (which I have mentioned), it often happens to me even now, as you will see

by what follows. They are certain words very distinctly formed in the soul, which, though not heard with the corporeal ears, are understood much more expressly and clearly than if they were so heard: nor can the soul avoid understanding them, and giving her whole attention to them: and it is useless to resist, however much we may strive. When in this world we do not wish to hear, we can stop our ears, or else attend to other things, in such a way, that though we may hear the words, yet we shall not understand them. But when God speaks to the soul, there is no remedy whatever, but we are made to listen to the words whether we will or no; and the understanding is obliged to be very attentive, in order comprehend them. Thus, whether we wish or no, God wishes we should understand Him; and because He is all-powerful, that which He resolves must be done, and so He is known as the true Lord of us all. Of this truth I have had much experience, for the resistance I made continued almost two years, on account of the fears I had: and even now I feel this fear sometimes; but resistance is of little use.

I should be glad to mention the errors that may happen here, though it seems to me that a person who has great experience would commit few or none: but this experience must be *great*. I should also like to declare the difference which exists when the spirit is good, or when it is bad, or between that which comes from an imagination formed by the understanding itself (which may happen), or between what the soul says to herself. I know not whether this can happen or no, though even this very day I think it *has* happened so. When the words come from God, I have experienced their truth in many things which were told me two or three years before; they all proved true, and till now not one has failed. There are also other things by which the spirit of God is clearly seen, as I shall afterwards relate.

To me it seems that a person who recommends something to God with great earnestness, may fancy that he foresees whether the affair will succeed or not: this I say is very possible. But he who understands things in *the other way* of which I have spoken, will clearly discover what will happen, because there is a great difference between the two ways

of hearing. And if it be something which the understanding forms, however delicately done, he understands that something is ordained and said. It is just like a person discoursing or listening to what another says. And the understanding will discover, that it does not listen then, because it works; and the words which it frames are, as it were, mute and fantastical, and not delivered with the same clearness as those others were. And here it is in our power to turn our attention to something else, or to hold our peace when we speak; but in the other case we have no such power. There is another sign much more important than all the rest: what is said by ourselves produces no effect; but when our Lord speaks, he utters both words and produces effects; and though they should not be words of devotion, but of reprehension, they immediately dispose the soul, they enable her to be affected, they enlighten her, regale her, and satisfy her. And should she be in a state of dryness, commotion, or disorder, these words take it all away, as it were, with the hand: yea, and even much better than the hands could do: for it seems then our Lord wishes us to understand that He is powerful, and that His words are deeds. It seems to me, that there is as much difference as there is between one speaking or hearing, neither more nor less; for what I speak I order (as I have mentioned) with my understanding; but if another speak to me, I do no more than hear, without any trouble at all to myself. In the first kind of words we cannot be certain if what we say be the truth, for we are like men half asleep; but the other words come from a voice so clear, that not one syllable of what is said is lost. And yet these things happen sometimes when both the understanding and the whole soul are in such great distraction and disorder, that they would never be able to form any reasonable discourse. But the soul finds in this other discourse certain great and important sentences, so well arranged, that though she were ever so perfectly recollected, she would be unable to produce such: and yet at the very first word thereof (as I have said) a total change is produced in her! Especially if the soul be in a rapture, when the powers are suspended, how will those things be understood which never came to her memory before? And how

will they come, then, when the memory does not act, and when the imagination has, as it were, become foolish?

But here we must notice, that whenever either visions are seen or these words heard, it is never, in my opinion, at that time when the soul is absorbed in the rapture itself; for at those periods (as I think I mentioned when speaking of the Second Water) all the powers are entirely lost; and hence we can then, in my opinion, neither see, nor hear, nor understand. The soul is wholly in the power of another at that time, but only for a short time; and methinks our Lord does not give her any liberty then in anything. But when that short time has passed, the soul remains still in the rapture; and the reason is, because the powers remain in such a way that, though they are not lost, yet they hardly operate at all, but are as it were absorbed, and not able to perform any discourses. But there are so many ways of discovering the difference between what is true and false, that if the soul should be deceived once, it would not happen so often. I say also, that if the soul have any experience, and be careful in observing what passes, she will see the truth very clearly; for besides all the other ways whereby that will be seen which I have mentioned, these words produce no effect, nor does the soul admit them: but those which come from God she *must* receive, whether she will or no. Neither does she give any credit to the other words, but rather discovers that they are the effect of an idle imagination, just in the same way as we should pay no attention to whatever a madman might say to us. But the supernatural words are as if we were listening to some very holy or learned person of great authority; and such an one, we know, would not deceive us. But this is indeed a mean comparison, because these words sometimes bring with them such a great majesty, that, without reflecting who it is that utters them, even should they be words of reprehension, they make us tremble: and should they relate to Divine love, then they make the soul dissolve, as it were, in loving. And these are things which (as I have before mentioned) are far from our remembrance; and such deep sentences were so suddenly pronounced, that a long time would be required to have formed and arranged them.

I think, then, it seems impossible, that we ourselves should imagine we could form such words.

There is no reason, then, why I should delay any longer on this point, for I think it would be a wonder if an experienced person could be deceived herein, unless he purposely wished to be deceived. It has often happened to me, if I were in any doubt, not to believe what was told me, but to think it was my own fancy. This I do when the occasion is past, but now it is impossible; for I have seen the words fulfilled a long time after; because our Lord is pleased the same should remain in the memory, for it cannot be forgotten. That which comes from the understanding is only the first movement, as it were, of our thought, which passes away and is forgotten. But the other is a work, rather than a word; and though some part of it may be forgotten in the course of time, yet the memory cannot lose it entirely, so as to forget what was said, unless it be a long time after, or except they be words of doctrine or words of favor. But if they relate to prophecy, in my opinion they can never be forgotten; at least, this never happened to me, though I have a bad memory.

I wish to repeat, that if a person be not so wicked as to take pleasure in deceiving himself, by being persuaded that he understands what he does not understand, it is impossible for him not to see clearly, that it is the soul who frames these words and speaks to herself, especially if she have any understanding at all of the Spirit of God; for if she have not, she may remain in this error during all her life, and may perhaps imagine she understands these words, though I know not how this could be. Either the soul desires to understand them or no: if she cast away that which she understands, and in no way desires to understand anything, on account of her innumerable fears, and for many other reasons which she may have, in order that she may remain quiet in prayer without such things,—how comes she to allow so much time to the understanding, so as to be able to form these discourses? Time is necessary for these. But by this other way we are instructed without any loss of time at all, and we come to understand certain things in an instant, when at other times a month would be required. The understanding and the

soul are amazed at some things which are understood. This is the truth : and whoever has any experience will see that all I have said is very correct. I bless God, who has enabled me thus to declare it ; and now I end this part of my discourse by saying, that, in my opinion, when such words come from the understanding, we may easily know it if we wish ; and every time that we are in prayer we may fancy that we understand the words. But in this other way it is not so, for there will be many days wherein,—though I should wish something respecting them,—it is impossible ; and when at other times I have no wish, then I am able to understand them, as I have said. And it seems to me, that whosoever desires to deceive others, saying that he knows this comes from God, which in reality comes from himself, might as well assert he heard it with his own ears, for it would cost him little. It is very true, that I never thought there was any other method of hearing or understanding, till I found in my own case that what I now say is correct, and this cost me a great deal of trouble.

When these things come from the devil, they not only produce no good effects, but they also produce evil effects. But this has not happened to me above twice or three times ; and I was instantly informed by our Lord that it was the devil. Besides the great dryness they leave behind them, they give the soul much trouble likewise, in the same way as when at other times our Lord permitted me to have great temptations and troubles of different kinds, and that I should often be tormented, as I shall relate afterwards. This is a disquiet, and we cannot understand whence it comes ; but it seems the soul resists it, and troubles herself thereby, and is afflicted without knowing why, because the devil says such and such a thing is not bad, but good. I think if one spirit is sensible of the presence of another, that the pleasure and delight which the diabolical spirit gives are, in my opinion, very different from those which God gives.—The devil, by these delights, may easily deceive a person who has never received any from God, for these coming from Him are indeed true delights, which infuse a sweet, strong, deep-rooted, quiet, delightful pleasure and joy. As to certain little devotions of the soul, and other slight feelings, they

are like young flowers which fall away at the least wind of persecution : these I do not call devotions, though they may be good beginnings, and holy feelings : but they are not sufficient to determine whether the effects come from a good spirit or a bad one. It is therefore necessary to proceed with great caution, for those who have advanced no farther in prayer than this, may easily be deceived if they should have visions or revelations. I never had these last till God was pleased in His goodness to give me the Prayer of Union, unless it were that first time of which I have spoken ; and it happened to me many years ago, when I saw Christ our Lord : and would that His Majesty had been pleased to make me understand at that time that it was a true vision, as I knew it was so afterwards, for this would have been of great use to me. From the delusions of the devil no sweetness whatever remains in the soul, but she feels much terror and great disgust.

I consider it certain, that God will never permit the devil to deceive any soul which places no confidence at all in herself, and is strengthened in her faith so firmly, that she would die a thousand deaths for the least article thereof ; and this love for her faith (and it is a strong and lively faith), infused into her immediately by God, always induces her to act in conformity with what the Catholic Church holds and teaches, like one who is so deeply persuaded of the truth, that all possible revelations which could be imagined, not even if she saw the heavens opened, could make her vary in the least point from the doctrine of the Church. But if she once begin to waver, even in thought, against this truth, or to entertain herself by saying, "If God himself speak thus to me, as He has to the saints, this may also be true," I do not say that she believes it, but that the devil begins to tempt her by this first motion to continue therein ; but she already sees how very evil this is. But I believe that often even these first motions will not attack a soul on this point, if she be already so strong as our Lord makes that soul to which He grants these favors. And I think she could tear these devils to pieces, whenever the question was respecting the least article which the Church holds. I say, then, that if the soul do not find in herself this great strength, and that

her devotion or vision which she may have is of no help thereto, she must not consider the vision to be a true and safe one, because, though the evil may not be perceived immediately, it might become great by little and little. For, as far as I can understand and know by experience, the truth of such visions depends on their conformity with Holy Scripture. And when they go against this rule, however slightly, it seems to me that I should have, without comparison, much greater reason to consider that they came from the devil than that they came from God, however great the conviction might seem to me. In this case there would be no necessity to seek for "signs," nor to examine from what spirit the vision came, since the sign would be clear as to make us believe it was from the devil: and even if all the world should assure me it was from God, I would not believe it. The truth is, that when these things come from the devil, it seems that all blessings hide themselves, and even fly from the soul, so unquiet and in such disorder does she remain, without feeling any good effect. And though some good desires may seem to be excited in her, yet they are not strong or effectual. The humility the devil leaves behind is false, unquiet, and without sweetness; and I think any one who has experienced "the good Spirit" will understand this.

However, the devil knows how to play many tricks, and therefore, in this matter, nothing is so certain but that something may still be feared from him. We must proceed then with caution, and have a director who is learned: from him we must conceal nothing, and then no harm can come to us, though I have had my share thereof, through the excessive fears to whom some of the religious were subject. It once happened, especially, that many persons met together in whom I placed great confidence (and I had reason to do so, though it was to one particularly that I gave the greatest confidence; still, when he commanded me, I spoke with others also); they consulted with one another about finding a remedy for my soul; for they loved me much, and feared I might be deceived. I was also subject to very great fears when I was not in prayer; but when I was, and our Lord was pleased to show me any favor, I immediately became calm and secure. I think there were five or six, all of whom

were great servants of God. But my confessor told me, that they were all firmly convinced my prayer came from the devil ; and they advised me not to communicate so often, and to employ myself in such a way that I might not be alone. As I have already mentioned, I was extremely timid, and the palpitation of my heart made me more so, so that often I had not courage to be alone in my room, even in the day time. As so many asserted my prayer came from the devil (though I could not believe it myself), I began to be extremely scrupulous, thinking I had but little humility, because they were all much more holy without comparison than I was, and also they were learned men ; and therefore I said, " Why should I not believe them ? " I forced myself as well as I could to do so ; and I thought much of my own wicked life, and how likely it was that what they said was true. Being thus afflicted I went into the church, and entered an oratory, having abstained many days from communicating, and avoided being alone, though solitude had formerly been my greatest consolation. All this I did without having any one to speak to, for they were all against me. Some of them I thought even laughed at me, whenever I spoke to them ; others advised my confessor to take care of me ; and others said, that it was quite clear I was deluded by the devil. My confessor alone gave me comfort (though, as I learnt afterwards, he agreed with the others so far as to have me examined); and he told me, that though it should be the devil, yet, if I did not offend God, he could do me no harm ; that my difficulties would be removed ; that I should pray to God frequently and earnestly, and that he, and the others, and many more persons would do the like. All my prayer was, as well as the prayers of those who I thought were servants of God, that His Majesty would direct me by some other way. I remained about two years in thus continually supplicating our Lord.

I could have no comfort in any way, when I thought it was possible that the devil had often spoken to me. But as I now spent no more time in solitude and in prayer, our Lord gave me the gift of recollection, even when I was engaged in conversation, and this without my being able to avoid it ; and He said to me what He pleased, though it

troubled me to hear Him. Being once all alone, without having any one near to console me, I could neither pray nor read, but was like one amazed at my great tribulation, and I was also terrified, considering if the devil could have power to deceive me. And being thus harassed and fatigued, without knowing what to do with myself (though I had often seen myself in such affliction, yet never had I been in such great trouble I thought), I remained four or five hours in this state; and there seemed to be no comfort for me, either on earth or in heaven, in the midst of the sufferings our Lord gave me, and under the fear also of a thousand dangers. But, O my Lord! how true a friend art Thou, and how powerful! What Thou wilt, Thou canst effect, and Thou never dost forsake or cease to love those who love Thee! May all creatures praise Thee, O Lord of the world! Oh! that I could cry out loud enough through the universe, in order to proclaim how faithful Thou art to Thy friends! All things fail; but Thou, the Lord of them all, dost never fail. How little is that which Thou allowest those who love Thee to suffer. O Lord, how delicately, how wisely, and how sweetly dost Thou know how to treat such souls! Oh! that I had never loved any one but Thee! It seems, O Lord, that sometimes Thou triest with rigor those who love Thee, that so by the excess of their affliction, they may understand the better the excess of Thy love. Oh! that I had understanding, and learning, and new words, that I might be able to proclaim Thy works, as my soul knows them.

These I have not; but if Thou wilt not desert me, I will never forsake Thee. Let all the learned men in the world rise up against me; let all creatures persecute me; let the devils torment me, provided only Thou, O Lord! wilt not forsake me; for I know well, by experience, with how great advantage Thou deliverest all those who put their confidence in Thee alone. When I was in this great trouble (even before I had begun to have any visions at all), these words alone were sufficient entirely to free me from all trouble: "Fear not, daughter, it is I; I will not forsake thee; do not fear."

It seems to me, that considering what I was then, a long time would have been necessary to persuade me to compose

myself, and that no one would have been able to do it. And yet, behold I was consoled by these words alone, and endued with strength, with courage, with repose and light in such a manner, that I saw my soul in that instant had become quite another creature. Oh! how good is God! Oh! how good and how powerful is the Lord! He gives not only advice, but remedies also. His words are works. How is our faith hereby strengthened, and our love increased! Thus I often call to mind how our Lord, when a tempest had risen at sea, commanded the winds and the waves, and there came a great calm; and I used to say then, Who is This whom all the powers of my soul obey, and who in an instant gives such dazzling light to chase away such great darkness, and makes that heart become soft which seemed before to be as hard as a stone, and who gives the water of sweet tears, where before there was so long such a great drought? Who inspires these desires? Who gives such courage? What have I been thinking of that I should fear? What is this? I desire to serve this Lord, and I wish for nothing but to please Him. I renounce all pleasure, and ease, and every other good, save only the doing of His will, and of this good I was sure, as I can easily affirm. Since then this Lord is so powerful, as I see He is, and know He is, and since all the devils are His slaves (and of this I can have no doubt, since it is of faith), what harm can they do me, who am a servant of this Lord and King? Why may I not have strength enough to fight with all the powers of hell? Thus I spoke. I then took a cross into my hand, and it really seemed to me, God gave me such courage that, in a short time, I was not afraid to encounter the devils, but believed I could with that cross easily overcome them all, and thus I challenged them; "Now, come all of you, for, being a servant of God, I wish to see what you can do against me."

It is very certain I thought they were afraid of me, for I remained so quiet and so fearless of them all, that even till this day, all the fears I formerly entertained are now entirely removed. And though I have sometimes seen them, as I shall afterwards relate, yet I never feared them more; rather did it seem that they were afraid of me. I have a certain dominion over them, given to me by the Lord of all

creatures, so that I make no more account of the devils than of so many flies ; and they seem to me to be so cowardly, that when they see little notice is taken of them, they have no strength or power whatever. These enemies only know how to attack those who give themselves up to them ; or, they make their attacks only when God permits them, for the greater good of His servants, whom they tempt and torment. I would it might please His Majesty to make us fear Him, whom we ought to fear, and to make us understand, that we receive greater harm from one venial sin than from all the powers of hell put together : this is certainly true. But when by our affection for honors, riches, and pleasures, we give the devils hold of us, by our loving and desiring that which we ought rather to abhor, then, indeed, they will do us much harm ; for we enable them to fight against us with our own arms, which we put into their hands, and with which we ought to defend ourselves. What a great pity this is ! But if we now resolve to detest all these for the love of God, and to embrace His cross, and to serve Him in good earnest, the devil flies away from these resolutions, as we should do from the plague. He is the friend of lies, and a lie itself. He will have nothing to do with one who walks in truth. But when once he sees a man's understanding obscured, he skilfully labors to obscure it still more : he helps us to blind ourselves ; and considering us only as children, he treats us as such, because he sees that we place all our satisfactism in the vain things of this world, which are only toys fit for children : with such he wrestles more or less as he sees cause.

May our Lord be pleased that this may never be my case ; but may He rather do me the favor to make me understand *that* to be ease and rest, which is indeed " true ease and true rest ; " and that to be honor, which is " true honor ; " and that to be pleasure, which is " true pleasure ; " and not the direct contrary to all this ; and then I care not a fig for all the devils in hell, for they will be afraid of me. I do not understand those fears by which we exclaim, " The devil—the devil ! " when we ought rather to say, " O my God—my God ! " and so make the devil tremble.

Do we not already know that the devil is unable to move, unless our Lord permit him ? What then is the cause of all

our fears? I acknowledge that I fear those more who are so frightened at the devil than I fear the devil himself, because *he* is quite unable to do me any harm; whereas these others (especially if they be confessors) may put our souls to much trouble. I myself have spent so many years in such great trouble, that now I am amazed when I consider how I have been able to endure it. Blessed be our Lord, who has so truly assisted me. Amen.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SAME SUBJECT IS CONTINUED. THE SAINT MENTIONS MANY THINGS WHICH HAPPENED TO HER.

I ESTEEM the courage which our Lord gave me against the devils, to be one of the great favors which He was pleased to confer upon me, because for a soul to go cowardly on, and to be fearful of nothing but offending God, is a very great inconvenience. For since we have a King who is omnipotent, and so great a Lord that He can do all things and make all men subject to Him, we have no reason to fear if we walk before Him with sincerity and purity of conscience. And for such an object, I should be glad to have all possible fears not to offend *Him* at any time, who is able at that very instant to annihilate us; but as long as His Majesty is pleased with us, no one can stand against us. You may, perhaps, say, "that this is very true, but where shall we find a soul so upright as to please Him entirely? And because she is not so pure, she is in fear." I answer, not my soul, certainly, for she is very miserable, unprofitable, and filled with a thousand miseries. But God does not act with such rigor as men do, for He knows our frailty; and the soul can understand, by means of numerous conjectures, whether she really loves God or no; because whoever arrive at this state, their love is not then a disguised love as it was at the beginning, but it is attended with such a great impulse and desire to see God (as I shall relate afterwards), that all things afflict, all things weary and tire, all things torment the soul, unless she be with God, or suffering and doing something for God.

There is no repose which does not displease her, because she sees herself absent from her "true repose;" and thus it is very clear (as I have mentioned), that things are not dissembled here.

It happened to me once, that I found myself in great tribulation, having to suffer many calumnies (on account of a certain affair of which I shall speak afterwards)* from all the religious where I lived, and even from the whole Order, and being also greatly afflicted by the opposition of the whole city. Then it was that our Lord addressed these words to me: "Of what art thou afraid? Dost thou not know that I am omnipotent? I will accomplish all that I have promised thee." And He indeed fulfilled His promise very well afterwards. After these words, I felt such new strength within me that I thought I could then have easily undertaken other things for His service, though they might cost me much more trouble, and have suffered again much more for Him. Hearing these interior words has happened so often to me that I am not able to mention the number of times. Our Lord has made me, and still continues to make me, so severe reproaches, on account of the imperfections I sometimes commit, that they are sufficient to annihilate the soul; at least they bring with them her amendment, because His Majesty (as I have mentioned) gives both advice and the remedy. At other times He brings to my remembrance my past sins, especially when He wishes to bestow on me some extraordinary favor; and this He does in such a way, that the soul sees herself as she will do at the great day of judgment; and the truth is represented to her with such a clear knowledge, that she knows not what to do with herself. At other times, He is pleased to put me on my guard against certain dangers relating to myself and others, which have not happened till three or four years after. These were all fulfilled, and some of the events might be mentioned, if necessary. Thus there are so many proofs that these things come from God, that, in my opinion, no one can be ignorant about the matter.

The most secure way is, not to fail to declare the state of

* The St. alludes to the foundation of her convent at Avila.

my whole soul, and the favors our Lord bestows upon me to my confessor ; to see that he be learned, and to be careful in obeying Him. This is the course which I take, and without this I could have no security, as our Lord has often told me ; and, indeed, it is not fit that we women should have any, for we have no learning ; and there can be no harm in this, but many advantages. I once had a confessor who mortified me very much, and sometimes he even afflicted me, and gave me a great deal of trouble and uneasiness ; and yet he was the person who, in my opinion, did me *the most good*. And though I had a great esteem for him, I had some temptations to leave him, for the trouble he gave me concerning my prayer quite harassed me. But whenever I determined to leave him, I immediately understood I was *not* to do so ; and I received a reprehension from our Lord, which I felt much more acutely than anything my confessor could impose upon me. And sometimes he tired me by asking me questions on the one hand, and giving me some reproof on the other ; and all this I had need of, so weak a will I had. He told me once, that I was not to obey if I were not resolved to suffer, and that I should consider what He had endured for me, and then everything would become easy.

Another confessor, to whom I had confessed in the beginning, gave me this advice : that since it had been proved the spirit which directed me was good, I should now keep matters quiet, and not tell the least thing to any one, because it was much better not to mention these favors. This advice pleased me, because every time I mentioned them to my confessor I felt great trouble : and, indeed, so great was my repugnance, that I had much less difficulty in declaring my greatest sins. And especially, if I mentioned those high favors which I had received, I thought my confessors would not believe me, but rather laugh at me. I was so troubled by this thought, that such conduct appeared to me to be a kind of irreverence towards the wonders of God, and for this reason I wished to conceal them. But I soon understood that my confessor had given me bad advice, and that I was by no means to conceal anything from him to whom I confessed, because thereby I should have great security ; but

that if I acted otherwise, I might sometime or other be deceived.

Whenever our Lord commanded me anything in prayer, if my confessor bade me do otherwise, our Lord would tell me to obey my director: His Majesty would afterwards direct him to command me to do that very thing which our Lord himself had commanded me before. When many of my Spanish books were taken away from me, so that I could not read, I was in great trouble, for it was a recreation for me to read some of them; but then I could read none, for what had been left were in Latin. On this occasion our Lord thus spoke to me: "Be not troubled, for I will give thee a living book." I could not understand what these words meant, for then I never had any vision; but within a short time afterwards I understood them very well, for I have had so much to think of and recollect myself about, concerning those things which were presented to me, and our Lord has shown me so great love by instructing me in so many ways, that I have had very little need of books, or rather no need at all. His Majesty has been a living book to me, wherein I have seen many truths. Blessed be such a book, which leaves imprinted in the heart what we read there, and this in such a manner that it can never be forgotten.

Who can behold our Lord covered all over with wounds and afflicted with persecutions, and not embrace them and love them? Who can have even but a glimpse of that glory which He gives to those who serve Him, and not know that all we can possibly do or suffer here is nothing, since we hope to receive such great rewards? How can he who considers the torments the wicked endure in hell, help esteeming all the sufferings of this life to be delights, in comparison with those torments, and not acknowledge how indebted he is to our Lord for having delivered him so often from that place of woe? But because I intend by the Divine assistance, to speak hereafter more in particular concerning some of these things, I wish now to continue the account of my life; and God grant that I may have known how to express myself properly in what I have already said. I firmly believe that whoever has had experience in those matters will have understood me, and that I have managed to say some-

thing to the purpose. But those who have had no such experience, will perhaps imagine I have been talking nonsense. It is sufficient to state this, that so I may not be blamed; nor will I blame any one who may be of a different opinion. May our Lord assist me, that I may always do His will. Amen.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SAINT MENTIONS ANOTHER WAY BY WHICH OUR LORD INSTRUCTS A SOUL, AND MAKES HER UNDERSTAND HIS WILL. SHE SPEAKS ALSO OF A WONDERFUL VISION SHE HAD, ETC.

To return now to the history of my life. I continued in great affliction and trouble, but at the same time had many prayers offered for me to our Lord, that he would be pleased to conduct me by another way, which might be more secure, since I was told that the former was a suspicious way. But true it is, that though I earnestly begged this favor from God, yet considering how evidently my soul was improved by the other way, I could never find it in my power to desire it heartily (though I still did in some degree), unless it were sometimes when I was harassed and distressed by what I was told, and by the fears with which my confessors filled me, I had now become quite another creature, and I could not help putting myself in the hands of God, beseeching Him that, since He knew what was fit for me, He would be pleased to accomplish His holy will in all things concerning me. I saw clearly, that by this way my soul was carried up to heaven, which formerly was dropping down to hell: why, therefore, should I desire such a thing? And as for believing those favors came from the devil, it was not in my power to force myself into such an opinion. Still I did what I could to desire the one, and to believe the other: but, as I have said, it was not in my power. I offered for this object a few poor works which I performed, if indeed I did any at all. I became devoted to some of the saints, that by their means I might be delivered from the devil. I performed Novenas, and I recommended myself to St. Hilarion, and St. Michael

the archangel, for this purpose : many other saints also I importuned, that by their prayers our Lord might show me the right way. At the end of two years, which both myself and others spent in prayers, that so our Lord might either conduct my soul by some other way, or show me the truth (for now those " words " I have before spoken of were very common), the following circumstance happened to me which I will now relate.

Being one day in prayer, on the festival of the glorious St. Peter, I saw standing very near me,—or to speak more properly, I felt and perceived (for I saw nothing at all, either with the eyes of my body or my soul) that Christ our Lord was close by me, and I found it was He who spoke to me, as I thought. As I had been up to this time extremely ignorant as to whether there could be any such vision as this, I fell at first into a great fear, as I could do nothing but weep : but presently our Lord gave me comfort, by speaking only one word ; and I found myself as I was wont, very quiet, with great delight and without fear. It seemed that Christ went always by my side : but the vision not being imaginary, nor represented in any form to the imagination, I perceived not in what shape He was, though I found, and felt very sensibly, that He was always on my right side ; that He was the witness of whatever I did, and that if I were recollected, even a little, or rather unless I were very much distracted, I could not help understanding that He was near me.

I went immediately to my confessor, being much grieved that I was obliged to tell him what happened. He asked me what form our Lord had when I saw Him ? I told him I did not see Him. My confessor then inquired *how* I knew it was Christ ? I answered, I knew not *how*, but that I could not help understanding our Lord was close by me, for I found and felt clearly that it was so ; that the recollection of my soul, in the Prayer of Quiet, was far greater and more continual ; that the effects also were very different from those others which I formerly experienced ; in a word, the thing appeared to me very certain and evident. I made use of several comparisons, whereby to make myself understood, and yet in my opinion, there is none which properly

explains this kind of vision ; for as this is one of the highest kind according to what that holy and spiritual man, Father Peter of Alcantara told me, as well as other great and learned men, so one cannot find words in the world to express it ; at least, we who know so little cannot, though learned men may make themselves better understood. But if, as I say, I saw our Lord neither with the eyes of the body or of the soul (because it was no imaginary vision), how can I understand and assert more clearly that He was near me, than if I had actually seen Him ? It seems as if a person were in the dark, and saw not another who stood near him, or as if the person were blind. This is something of a comparison, though not much ; for even if a person were blind, he might know another was present by his other senses, because he could hear him speak or stir, or he might touch him. But here there is nothing at all of this, nor is there any darkness ; but our Lord's presence is represented to the soul by a sign, clearer than the sun itself, and yet no sun or brightness is seen, but only a certain light, which, without our seeing it, illuminates the understanding, that so the soul may enjoy so great a good. This vision brings also great benefits with it.

This is not a presence of God, such as many times is perceived, especially by those who have arrived at Union or the Prayer of Quiet, who when they begin to make that prayer, seem to find the person ready at hand to whom they speak ; and they fancy he hears them, by the effects and the spiritual sentiments which are produced,—such as those of great love, and faith, and resolutions accompanied with great tenderness of devotion. And though this is a great favor of God, and highly to be esteemed by him to whom it is given, yet it is no vision ; we only understand that God is there, by the effects which are (as I have said) produced in the soul ; for in this manner His Majesty wishes to make himself perceived. But here we see clearly that Christ our Lord, the Son of the Blessed Virgin, is present : in the other method of prayer, certain influences of the Divinity, are represented ; but here, together with them, we find that the most Sacred Humanity also accompanies us, and wishes to bestow favors upon us. My confessor then asked me this question : “ Who told you that it was Jesus Christ ? ” “ He Himself told me

so," I answered, "and this very often: but even before he told me so, my understanding was impressed with the truth that it was He: and this before He told me so, and yet I saw him not. If any one whom I had never seen, but had only heard something about him, had come to speak to me, and I were either blind or in the dark; and should he tell me who he was, I should believe him: still I should not be able so positively to assert it was he, as I should be had I seen him. But in this case I could assert it, for there is imprinted so clear a notice of His presence in the mind, without our seeing him, that it seems impossible to doubt it; and our Lord wishes to have it so engraven on the understanding, that it can no more be questioned than what we actually see; no, nor so much. We sometimes suspect things which we see, and fancy this or that without any reason: but here, though this suspicion may arise suddenly, yet on the whole we remain so certain, that a doubt cannot continue. And so also it happens, though in a different manner, that God instructs the soul, and speaks to her, without speaking in the way I have already mentioned.

This is a language which is so heavenly, that we cannot well understand it in this world, however much we may desire to do so, unless our Lord himself be pleased to teach it by experience. Our Lord places in the very interior of the soul whatever he is pleased the soul should understand; and there He represents it without any image or form of words, but only by that manner of vision already spoken of. And let us mark well this manner of God's making the soul understand what He will, and his great truths and mysteries; for often that which I understand from our Lord in any vision, His majesty is pleased to represent to me in this way; and it seems for these reasons, where the devil is least able to intermeddle or intrude himself; and if these reasons are not good, I am likely to be deceived. This kind of vision is so spiritual, and so also is the language, that there is no noise nor tumult in the powers of the mind, nor in any of the senses of the body, in my opinion; and by this means the devil can gain no advantage. This happens sometimes, but it lasts only for a short time: at other times it seems to me, that neither the powers of the mind are suspended, nor the

senses of the body taken away, but they are all occupied in themselves; but this does not always happen in contemplation, or rather it happens very seldom. But when the senses are lost, I was saying that we neither operate or do anything ourselves, but all seems to be the work of our Lord. It is like food conveyed into the stomach, without our either having eaten it, or so much as knowing who placed it there; all we know is, that there it is, though we neither know what the food is, nor who placed it there. But in this other case the food is known, though I cannot tell how it got there; for neither did I see it, nor do I understand it, nor was I ever moved to desire it, nor did I ever know before that such a thing could possibly be.

In the heavenly "Discourse" of which I have already spoken, God makes the understanding reflect upon that which is said, whether it will or no; for there it seems as if the soul had some other kind of ears to hear, and that He makes her listen, and not think of something else; as if one who could hear well were not allowed to stop his ears; but people cried aloud to him, and thus, whether he wished or not, he would be obliged to hear. Still he does something, since he endeavors to understand what they say. But here the soul does nothing; for even that little which was done in the former case, and which consisted only in listening, is taken away from her now. She finds now everything ready dressed and eaten, so that she has nothing more to do but to enjoy her food. It is like a person who, without ever having learnt, or so much as having endeavored to read, or without having studied at all, should find himself in possession of the whole of that science; and this without knowing either *how* or whence it came, since he had never endeavored to acquire it, or even learn his A B C. This last comparison, I think explains some part of this celestial gift, for the soul perceives that she has become wise on a sudden, and that the mystery of the most Holy Trinity, and other very sublime truths, are so clearly explained to her, that she could argue with any divine on the truth of these high subjects. The soul on these occasions seems so amazed, that even *one* such favor as this is sufficient to produce a total change in her, and to make her love nothing but Him, who without

any labor on her part has made her capable of such unspeakable blessings ; who communicates His secrets to her, and speaks to her with such great friendship and love as cannot be written in words, because He shows her some favors which are so admirable, that unless we have a lively faith, we cannot conceive it possible God should grant such favors to one so unworthy of them. I am thinking, then, of mentioning only a few of those which our Lord has shown to me, unless I be commanded to do otherwise ; and some of the visions, if mentioned, may perhaps do some good, that so if there be any persons to whom our Lord may have imparted the like, they may not wonder, nor consider them impossible, as I did ; or these visions may show the way and manner by which our Lord conducted my soul ; and this is what I have been commanded to write.

Let us now return to the manner of our understanding these things. To me it seems our Lord is here pleased, that our soul should have some knowledge of that which passes in heaven ; and that as the blessed understand one another there without speaking (the truth of which I never knew till our Lord in His goodness made me see it, and showed it to me in a rapture) ; so also it should be here, that God and the soul might understand one another ; and this for the sole reason that His Majesty is pleased they should do so, without any other artifice being used to make known the love which these two friends bear each other. Just as in this world, when two persons love one another very dearly, and have a good understanding, they seem able to understand each other without any signs, by only looking at one another. Thus ought it to be in our case, since (without our knowing expressly how) these two lovers look earnestly at each in the face, as the spouse in the Book of Canticles saith to his beloved ; for so I think I have heard it mentioned there.

O admirable benignity of God ! who dost permit Thyself to be looked upon by those eyes, which have abused their sight so much, just as the eyes of my soul did ! After the sight of thee, O Lord ! let them now be accustomed no more to look upon base objects, nor to take pleasure in anything out of Thee ! O ingratitude of mortals ! how far wilt thou go ? I know by experience that this is true which I am

saying, and that what I have mentioned is the least of those favors, which Thou givest to a soul whom Thou bringest to such a state as this. O ye souls! who have begun to use mental prayer, and all you who have true faith, what blessings do ye seek which can in any way be compared to the *least* of those which are obtained by the servants of God even in this mortal life, not to mention the happy eternity hereafter? Consider that even in this world it is quite true, that God gives himself to those who forsake all things for the love of Him. He is no acceptor of persons: He loves every one; and no one has any excuse, however wicked he may have been, since our Lord acted in this manner with me, and raised me to such a state. Consider also, that what I am now saying is not so much as a cipher of what may be said: so much only is mentioned as is necessary for making this kind of vision, and the favors which our Lord gives the soul, somewhat understood. But I cannot declare that which the soul feels when our Lord is pleased to impart to her His secrets and His greatness,—a delight so superior to all that can possibly be imagined in this world, that with great reason it makes her abhor the pleasures of this life, all of which put together are but dirt; it is even loathsome to compare those pleasures with the joys of this world, even though they could be enjoyed forever. And of these pleasures, what proportion does God give us in this life? No more than a single drop of water is to that great overflowing river, which is prepared for us above.

It is a shame—(and I apply it to myself, and if it were possible for souls to be ashamed in heaven, I should be ashamed there much more justly than any one else), that we should desire such great blessings and delights, and such infinite glory, all at the cost of our good Jesus. Should we not at least weep over Him with the daughters of Jerusalem, if we will not help Him to carry the cross with Simon of Cyrene? How can we think of coming to enjoy, by pleasures and pastimes, that which He purchased for us at the cost of so much blood? This is impossible. And how can we think, by aspiring to vain honors, to be able to remedy that scorn and contempt which He endured for us, that so we might remain forever with Him? No, no, we take quite a wrong

course ; we shall never reach our journey's end by such a way. Your Reverence must cry aloud to make these truths heard ; and since God has deprived me of this liberty, I wish to be always crying out to myself,—“ How late did I come to hear and know God ! ” This will be seen by what I have written ; and it is a source of great confusion to me to speak of it, and therefore I now wish to hold my peace.

I will only mention what I have sometimes been considering, viz., that God may be pleased to bring me to such a state, that I may enjoy this immense good. What an accidental glory and pleasure will it be for the blessed who enjoy this happiness, when they shall find that, though it was late, yet they omitted nothing which it was possible for them to do for the love of God ! Nor did they fail to present Him with the most they could possibly offer in every way, according to the strength which they had, and as their state allowed them. How rich will he find himself, who left all the riches he had for Christ ! How full of honor, who rejected all earthly honor, and rejoiced only in seeing himself despised, for love of Him ! How wise will he be, who rejoiced that men considered him a fool, since “ Wisdom ” itself was called by that name ! How few such persons are now in the world, on account of our sins ! Alas ! it seems that all those have departed long ago whom the world was wont to consider foolish, when it saw them perform those heroic acts of true lovers of Christ. O world ! O world ! how art thou esteemed, because thou hast few that know thee ! But to what a state have we come, when men imagine that God is better served by them when they are considered to be wise and discreet ! This must needs be so, according as we now understand the word “ discretion.” And we think we give little edification unless we make a show of great gentility and authority, each one according to his state. Even friars, priests, and nuns, think it a novelty to wear anything which is old or patched, as well as an occasion of scandal to the weak ; and even to be recollected and addicted to prayer ! To such a state has the world come ! But the study and practice of Christian perfection, and the great impulses which the saints were accustomed to have, do much more harm, I believe, to the wretched creatures who live in these times

than any scandal which could arise from religious persons publishing that to the world by their works, of which they speak by their words, that so mankind might hold the world in little esteem. From such scandals as these our Lord draws great good, and if some are scandalized, others will repent of their sins, and will have in their actions some trace of what Christ and His apostles suffered; for now we have more need of this than ever.

What an excellent example did God lately take from us, in the person of that blessed man, Father Peter of Alcantara! The world was no longer able to endure such perfection. Men say, that our health is now not so good, and that we cannot live now as people did in former times. But that holy man lived in our time, and yet he had as fervent a spirit as men had in other days, and he trod the world no less under his feet; for though we do not go barefoot, nor do such austere penances as he did, yet there are many ways whereby we may tread the world under our feet. Our Lord will teach us these ways, when He finds a soul fit to learn them. And how great a soul did God bestow on this saint of whom I am now speaking, to enable him to continue for seven-and-forty years a course of such sharp and vigorous penance as all know his to have been. I will say something about it, for I know it is all true.

He told it to me and to another, from whom he concealed little: and the reason why he told it, was the great love he bore me; and this our Lord gave him to protect me, and encourage me, at the time of my greatest necessity, of which I have already spoken, and will declare further. He told me how, to the best of my remembrance, he had slept no more than one hour and a half between day and night for the space of forty years; and that this was the greatest difficulty he found in his penance at the beginning, to overcome himself in point of sleep; and that for this purpose he was always obliged to be either kneeling or standing; and when he slept it was in a sitting posture, leaning his head against a little piece of wood which he had driven into the wall: that he could not lie down at full length in his cell, even if he wished, for it was not above four feet and a half long, as is well known. During all these years he never put on his hood,

how hot soever the sun, or how great soever the rain might be : he never wore anything on his feet, and his body was clad only with a habit of thick coarse sackcloth, without any other thing next his skin, and this as strait as could be endured, with a short mantle of the same material over it. He told me, that when the weather was extremely cold, he was accustomed to put off his mantle, and to leave the door and the little window of his cell open, that so when he afterwards put his cloak on again, and shut his door, he might give his body so much refreshment by it, as that it might be quiet with this additional warmth. It was usual for him not to eat till the third day ! He asked me why I was astonished at this ? For he said it was very possible for one who had accustomed himself to it. A companion of his told me, that sometimes it happened he ate nothing for eight days ; this perhaps might have been when he was in prayer, for then he used to have great raptures and impulses of the love of God, of which I myself was an eye-witness. His poverty was extreme, and so also was his mortification from his youth ; for he told me he had lived three years in a house of his Order without knowing any of the religious, except by their speech, for he never lifted up his eyes : hence, when he was obliged to go from one place to another, he knew not how, except by following the other religious. This was the case on journeys. As to women, for many years he never looked at any one. He told me that it was now all the same to him whether he saw any one or did not see them ; but when I became acquainted with him he was then very old, and his weakness so extreme, that he seemed to be made only of the roots of trees. With all this sanctity he was very affable, though he expressed himself in few words, unless some question were asked him. In them he was very agreeable, for he had an excellent understanding. Many other things I should like to mention, but I fear your Reverence might ask me why I turned to this subject ! And even this little I have not written without some fear. I shall add no more, but only that he died as he lived, preaching to and admonishing his friars. When he saw his last end

approaching, he exclaimed,—“*Lætatus sum in his quæ dicta sunt mihi,*” &c.,* and, kneeling down, he expired.†

Since then our Lord has been pleased to let me enjoy more of him than I did when he was alive, for he gives me advice in many things. I have often seen him in exceeding great glory. The first time he appeared he said,—“O happy penance, which has obtained so great a reward!” And many other things he said. A year before he died he appeared to me, when we were at some distance from each other; I understood that he was to die, and I warned him of it. When he expired he appeared to me, and told me that he was going to rest. I did not then believe it, but yet I mentioned it to some persons, and within eight days after the news came to us that he was dead; or rather, to speak more properly, that he had then begun to live forever. Behold here the severe penance of his life, which ended in so much glory, that methinks he comforts me now much more than when he was alive. Our Lord told me once, that men should not ask anything in his name without being heard; and I have myself recommended many things to him that he might beg them of our Lord, and I always found them granted. May our Lord be blessed forever. Amen.

But what a discourse I have been making, that so I might excite your Reverence not to esteem anything in this world, as if you did not know this already, or were not determined to abandon all things, and to perform what you had resolved upon! But I see such wickedness in the world, that though it may profit little for me to speak, and though it may be tiresome for me to write, still it does give me some ease, even though I should speak against myself. May our Lord forgive me whatever I may have committed in this particular; and I beseech your Reverence also to pardon me for putting you to so much unnecessary trouble: it seems that I wish to make you do penance for what I myself have committed.

* “I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord.” (Psalm exxvi.)

† See the Life of this great Saint in Alban Butler, Oct. 19. The Saint wrote two excellent short treatises.—1. “On Mental Prayer; 2. “On the Peace of the Soul.” The former has been translated into English by Giles Willoughby. (Dolman, 1843.)

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SAINT SPEAKS OF THE GREAT FAVORS OUR LORD BESTOWED UPON HER, AND HOW HE APPEARED TO HER FOR THE FIRST TIME.

BUT now to return to what I was speaking of: I had that kind of vision for some days continually, and it was so profitable to me that I never omitted prayer; and besides, whatever I happened to do, I took care it should be done in such a manner that it might not displease Him, whom I evidently saw to be there, as a witness of all that passed; and though sometimes I feared on account of what I was told, still my trouble did not last long, because our Lord comforted and encouraged me. Being one day in prayer, it pleased our Lord to show me His sacred hands, and they were so excessively beautiful that I am not able to describe them. But this sight gave me great fear, as indeed every new sight does in the beginning of any of those supernatural favors which our Lord is pleased to show me. Within a few days after, I saw His divine face, the sight of which, methinks, left me quite absorbed. I could not conceive why our Lord showed Himself thus to me, by little and little, since afterwards He resolved to do me the favor that I should see His whole person, till I came to reflect that our Lord was pleased to conduct me according to my natural weakness. May He be blessed forever, since such great glory united together, so base and wicked a creature as myself could not have endured; and therefore our merciful Lord, who knew this, disposed of things in this manner.

Your Reverence may, perhaps, imagine that there was not any need of much strength, to behold hands and face so beautiful. But glorified bodies are so beautiful, that the glory they bring along with them (when we behold such supernatural and delightful objects), quite amazes and distracts the soul; and thus I was so frightened at first, that I fell into great trouble and disorder, though afterwards I gained certainty and security, with other such effects, that were quickly vanished away.

On the feast of St. Paul, while I was hearing mass, all

the most sacred Humanity of Christ was represented to me, as it is painted after His resurrection; but with such great beauty and majesty as I once particularly described to your Reverence, when you commanded me to do so. I was troubled enough at your commanding me, for such a thing cannot be done without almost annihilating one's self. But I did what you commanded me as well as I could, and therefore I need not now repeat it again in this place. I only say, that if there were nothing else in heaven to delight our sight but the excessive beauty of glorified bodies, the glory would be immense, especially to behold the Humanity of Jesus Christ our Lord; and if His Majesty be so great, even when it is represented to us in this world, according to that proportion which our misery can bear, what will it be when we shall wholly enjoy and possess such happiness! This vision, though represented to me by the way of a mental image, was never seen by me with the eyes of my body, nor was any other,—but only with the eyes of my soul. They who understand these things better than I do, affirm that the former vision, which was purely intellectual, is of a higher and more perfect kind than this; and also that this is much more so than the others, which are seen with corporal eyes; for these latter, they say, are of the lowest kind, in which the devil can more easily introduce his illusions; though at that time I could not understand any such thing, but rather desired, that when I was to receive any favor of this nature, it might be so that I might see it with my corporal eyes, to the end that my confessor might not tell me I only fancied these things. And so it also happened to me as soon as it was past (and this was in one instant), that I began to think I might, perhaps, have only fancied the vision, and I was thus somewhat troubled for having told my confessor, thinking whether or no I had deceived him. This was the cause of another trouble, and so I went to him and told him of it. He asked me whether I really thought so, and if I had any desire to deceive him? I told him the truth, because, as far as I can judge, I had no wish to tell a lie, nor did I intend to do such a thing, nor would I, for the whole world, have said one thing for another. This he knew very well, and so he did his best to comfort and calm

me. But I felt so unwilling to trouble him with these matters, that I know not how the devil could have made me fancy I had feigned anything, or deceived my confessor : this he did to torment me.

But our Lord made such haste to show me favors, and to declare this truth, that I was soon free from every doubt whether it were fancy or no : since then I see my folly very clearly. Though I were to employ many years in imagining how I could represent an object so beautiful, I should neither have the power nor the ability to do it, for such a sight exceeds all that can possibly be imagined in this world, by its clearness and brightness alone. It is not a splendor which dazzles, but a sweet lustre. It is a brightness infused, which affords an exceeding great pleasure to the sight, and does not tire us ; nor does that light offend, whereby we see this object of such divine beauty. It is a light so different from that of this world, that even the brightness of the sun itself, which we see, is dim in comparison with that light and brightness which are represented to the sight, and hence the eyes can scarcely open themselves to behold it. It is as if we beheld very pure water running upon crystal, with the sun reflecting upon it and striking through it, in comparison with other very muddy water, seen in a cloudy day, and running upon an earthy bottom. Not that any sun is represented, nor is that light like the light of the sun ; in a word, this light seems a natural light, and the other but an artificial one. This is a light which never sets, and it has no night, but as it is always light, nothing disturbs it. Indeed, it is of such a nature, that however sublime the understanding of a person may be, he would never, during all his life, be able properly to conceive what its nature is ; and God places it before us so suddenly, that we should not even have time to open our eyes, if that were necessary ; but it helps us no more to have them open than shut, whenever our Lord is pleased we should see it, whether we will or no. Nor can any distraction divert us from it, nor any power resist it ; nor, on the other hand, can any care or diligence procure it ; and of this I have had good experience, as I shall mention.

But what I wish to relate now, is the *manner* how our Lord shows himself by these visions. I do not say I will

explain the manner by which this strong light is able to convey itself into the inward sense, and imprint on the understanding so clear an image, as to make it really appear to be there, because this point belongs to learned men. Our Lord has not been pleased to make me understand the manner thereof; and I am myself so ignorant, and my understanding is so dull, that though many have used great endeavors to explain it to me, I have not yet been able to comprehend the manner thereof. And this is very certain, that though your Reverence may think I possess a quick understanding, I do not; for, in many things I have found what I say to be true by experience, viz., that it comprehends no more than what is given it to eat, as the saying is. Sometimes my confessor was amazed at my ignorance, and he never made me understand, nor did I desire to know how God did this, or how this could be; neither did I ask him about it, though as I have already mentioned, I consulted for several years many learned men, to know whether this or that were a sin or no; but as for the rest, I only had occasion to remember that God does everything, and that I was not to wonder at His works, but only to praise Him: and thus my devotion was rather excited by difficulties, and the more difficulties the more devotion I had.

I will now mention what I have learned by experience, viz., how our Lord does this: your Reverence, however, will express it better, and will explain all that may be obscure, and which I know not how to explain. It seemed to me, on certain occasions, to be an image which I saw, but on other occasions it was not so; it was Christ himself, judging as I did from the clearness with which He was pleased to manifest Himself to me. And yet sometimes it was in so indistinct a way, that it seemed to be an image or representation, but very different from those portraits which are made in this world, however perfect they may be, for I have seen some very good ones. It would be foolish to suppose that there is a likeness in any way between them both, for however well a portrait may be taken, it can never equal the natural one, for the one is alive and the other dead. But let us put this aside, though yet the relation of one to the other holds very well.

Still, I say not that I make a comparison between Christ our Lord and that which I said I saw ; for comparisons never agree so perfectly as these two things did. But the truth is, there is the same difference in what I saw from any image, as there is between something which lives and something which is only painted : if, then, this was an image, it was a living image, and not a dead man, but Christ alive ; and I was enabled to see Him both as God and man, not as He was in the sepulchre, but as He appeared after His Resurrection. And sometimes he comes with such great Majesty, that no one can doubt of its being our Lord himself, especially after receiving the Blessed Sacrament, for then we know well He is there, since our faith assures us of it. He then shows himself to be so entirely the Master of this my dwelling, that the soul seems to be wholly dissolved and consumed in Christ. O my Jesus ! who can express, so as to be understood, the majesty with which Thou showest Thyself ? And how absolutely Thou art Lord of the whole universe, and of the heavens, and of other innumerable worlds and heavens which Thou canst create, as the soul understands according to the majesty wherewith Thou showest Thyself to her ; then she knows that all these would be nothing for Thee to be Lord of.

Here, my sweet Jesus ! the soul clearly sees what little power the devils have in comparison with Thine ; and how he who pleases Thee may trample hell entirely under his feet. Here the soul sees the reason the devils had to tremble when Thou didst descend into Limbo, and how they would then have wished rather to have been in a thousand other hells lower down, that so they might fly from such great majesty. I see likewise that Thou desirest to make our soul understand how great Thou art, and the power which Thy most sacred Humanity possesses, joined with Thy Divinity. Here is well represented what the day of judgment will be, when we shall see the majesty of this King, and behold the rigor He will use against the wicked. Here true humility is fixed in the soul, by seeing her own misery, of which she can be no longer ignorant. Here we acquire confusion and true repentance for our sins, so that when she beholds what great love our Lord has shown her, she knows

not what to do with herself, but is, as it were, wholly annihilated. I say, this kind of vision has such excessive power and strength (when our Lord is pleased to show a soul a considerable portion of His greatness and majesty), that I consider it impossible for any one to endure it, unless our Lord be pleased to assist the soul in a supernatural manner, by making her remain in a rapture or ecstasy, and so lose the sight of that Divine presence by the act of enjoying it. This vision, however, may afterwards be forgotten; and yet, it cannot be *entirely* forgotten, because the Divine majesty and beauty are so deeply imprinted in the soul, but only in the case where our Lord is pleased that the soul should suffer dryness and great solitude, of which I shall speak afterwards; then it seems that one forgets even God himself. The soul is now quite another creature from what she was before; and it seems she has a lively kind of love communicated to her anew, in a much higher degree; for though that other kind of vision I spoke of before (which represents our Lord without any image), be something more sublime in itself; yet in order to make it remain long in our memory, according to our weakness, and to entertain and keep our thoughts well employed, it is very important for us that so Divine a presence should also remain imprinted in the imagination. Thus these two kinds of vision always come together; and it is thus that they come, because the excellence, and beauty, and glory of the most holy Humanity of Christ are beheld with the eyes of the soul; and by the other way already spoken of, we are enabled to comprehend that He is God, and that He is powerful and omnipotent; that He commands and governs all things; and that His love fills everything.

This kind of vision should be valued very highly, and is, in my opinion, without danger; for it is easily known by the effects, that the devil has no power therein. I think, however, that three or four times he wished to represent our Lord himself to me, by a false representation; but though he may assume the form of flesh, yet he cannot counterfeit by that glory which is manifest, when the vision comes from God. The devil makes certain representations in order to destroy some true vision which the soul has seen; but she

resists him as well as she can, though she is so disturbed, disquieted, and disordered, that she loses the devotion and pleasure she had before, and remains without any prayer at all. This happened to me three or four times in the beginning, as I have already mentioned. But this false vision is so different from the other, that whosoever has arrived only at the Prayer of Quiet, will, I think, understand the matter, by the effects which have been spoken of in the discourse on those "words or speeches" which are sometimes imprinted on the soul. This is a very certain truth; and unless a soul wish to be deceived, I believe the devil will not be able to deceive her, if she walk with humility and simplicity. Whoever receives a true vision from God, will from that instantly perceive the nature of another, which is false; and though this false vision may impart a certain pleasure and delight, yet the soul will shake them off; and besides, in my opinion, the pleasure will not be real, nor will it have even the appearance of a love which is pure and chaste, and hence very soon she will discover whence it comes. That all this should be mere imagination is utterly impossible, for the beauty and loveliness of only *one* hand far surpasses all our imagination. Besides, without our remembering or ever having thought of any such matter, to see objects presented before us in an instant, which could never have been formed by the imagination without a long time (because such things surpass all that we are able to comprehend in this world): this, I repeat, would be impossible. And even if we *could* do something of this kind, yet it could not be done for this other reason, which I will now mention. If we should be able to represent any such thing by the strength of our understanding—(and then it would not produce the great effects which a true vision does, if, indeed, any at all), it would be like one desirous of going to sleep, and yet he would remain awake, because he cannot fall asleep. But if he should wish to sleep, and has need of it, and at the same time should have any weakness in the head which prevents sleep, he uses every exertion for this purpose, and sometimes he thinks he succeeds a little. But if, after all, he do not truly and really sleep soundly he is not refreshed, nor does his head become much better, rather it may sometimes become

worse. And so is it, in some measure, with regard to this case, for then the soul becomes dizzy; she is no longer strengthened or supported, but rather gets tired and disgusted. But, in the other case of which I was speaking, I cannot express what riches are acquired by the soul, and even the body itself becomes healthful and vigorous!

These and other reasons I alleged, when I was told "these things came from the devil, or that I only fancied them." This was often mentioned to me; and I, on the other hand, used to make comparisons as well as I could, and our Lord put them into my mind. But all availed little; for as there were some very holy persons in that place (and I being misery in itself in comparison with them), who were not guided by this way, they immediately began to fear that my sins, in all appearance, were the cause of these effects; and so the report went from one to another in such a manner, that many became acquainted with these secrets of mine, though I had mentioned them to no one but my confessor, or to such as he commanded me to mention them. I said to them once, that if they who spoke thus to me should assert that some person with whom I had just been talking, and whom I knew very well, was *not* that person, but that I only fancied such a person, I should have more easily believed them than that which I saw. But if this individual left some jewels with me, and they remained still in my hand, as pledges of the great love he bore me; and that now I perceived I was rich, whereas I was very poor before, I should not then be able to believe them, however much I might desire it, especially since I could show these jewels to others, for all who knew me saw clearly that I had become quite another person, and so my confessor also told me, for the difference was very great in every respect, and not feigned, but all could see it very plainly. Having been so wicked before, I used to say I could not believe, that if the devil did this to deceive me and send me to hell, he would make use of means very different from these, which had greatly served to root out vices, and to plant in me strength and every virtue; and I perceived very clearly, that I soon became by these means quite another creature.

My confessor* belonged, as I have mentioned, to the Society of Jesus, and a very holy man he was: he also made the same answer, as I afterwards learnt. He was very discreet and very humble; and yet this humility cost me many troubles; for though he was a learned man, and a man of prayer, yet he did not trust in himself: as our Lord did not lead him along this road, he had much trouble with me in several ways. They even wished him to take heed of me, lest the devil might deceive him, by inducing him to believe something of what I told him; and to prove their point, they adduced the examples of other persons. All this gave me trouble enough, for I was afraid I should have no one to hear my confession, but that every one would fly from me; and so I did nothing but weep. It was a mercy of God that this Father still continued to hear me: but he was so great a servant of God, that for His sake he was willing to expose himself to everything; and so he bade me not to offend God, nor to depart from the directions he gave me. He told me also not to fear about his leaving me. He always comforted and encouraged me, and commanded me never to conceal anything from him. And should I observe this command, he told me, that though it were the devil, he would not be able to do me any harm, but rather that our Lord would draw good out of the evil which the devil wished to do my soul. He wished to advance me in all things as well as he could, and I, being in such fear, obeyed him in everything, though imperfectly. He had a great deal of trouble with me for more than three years, during which I confessed to him, in the midst of these afflictions and the great persecutions I underwent, for our Lord allowed people to form a bad opinion of me; and these afflictions came, many of them at least, without any fault of mine, so that I was always coming to the Father, and he was blamed on my account, though he was not in any fault whatever. I think it would have been impossible for him to have endured all these troubles so long, had he not been a man of great sanctity; but our Lord animated him, and enabled him to bear so much, for he had to answer every one who thought

* Baltassar Alvarez. (See his edifying Life, by Father Dupont; also some account of his manner of prayer, in Baker's "Sancta Sophia.")

I was a lost soul ; but they believed him not : and on the other hand, he had to calm my mind, and to draw me out of the fear I had, by threatening me with a greater. He had also to satisfy me in another respect, for, with regard to every vision which was new, our Lord permitted me afterwards to have great fears. All this came from my having been and being still so great a sinner. Still, he comforted me with much compassion, and had he followed his own opinion, I should not have suffered so much, for God enabled him to understand the truth in all things : and I believe that the Sacrament of Penance gave him light to direct me.

Those other servants of God, who could not make themselves sure of my being directed by God, often conversed with me ; and when I used to be carelessly speaking of some things, they would understand them in a different manner. Now one of these I loved much, for my soul was exceedingly indebted to him, and he was a very holy man. I was much troubled to see that I could not make myself understood by him ; while he, on the other hand, desired my spiritual good with all his heart and soul, and prayed that our Lord would enlighten me. And so when I used to be relating things to them without reflection upon what I said, it seemed to them to be a sign of little humility in me ; and when they saw me commit some fault (and they might have noticed many), all condemned me immediately. Sometimes they asked me some questions, and I answered them with candor, and even without reflection : then they thought I wished to *teach* them, and that I considered myself to be very clever, and accordingly they would go to my confessor to complain, because they certainly wished me well, and he reprimanded me. This lasted a long time, and I was afflicted in many ways ; but, as I received many favors from our Lord, I was able to endure every trouble.

I mention all these things that we may understand, what trouble it is not to have a director who is experienced in the ways of the Spirit ; hence, if our Lord had not favored me so much as He did, I know not what would have become of me, since there were circumstances sufficient to have deprived me of my senses ; and sometimes I saw myself in such a state that I knew not what to do with myself, except

to lift up my eyes to our Lord, because the persecution which I endured from good men—I who was such a weak and wicked poor creature, and also so timorous, may perhaps seem scarcely worth relating; and though during my life I have passed through very great troubles, yet this last I have found to be the most severe I ever experienced. God grant that by this trouble I may have been able to serve His Majesty a little, for I am sure that those who accused and condemned me promoted His service, and all tended to my greater good.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SAINT CONTINUES THE SAME SUBJECT, AND MENTIONS CERTAIN GREAT FAVORS WHICH OUR LORD SHOWED HER, AND WHAT HE SAID TO COMFORT AND CONSOLE HER, ETC.

I HAVE wandered much from my subject, in endeavoring to prove that what I have mentioned was not an effect of the imagination; for how should we be able, by any study of our own, to represent the Humanity of Christ, and by our imagination to form any idea of such great beauty? For this purpose no little time would be requisite, if we wished to represent anything which could in any manner resemble it. In the one case we may well represent it before our imagination, and stand looking at it for some time, and consider His shape and complexion, and so go on perfecting the image by little and little, and impressing it on our memory, for who can take this power from the mind? And this much I am able to do by the strength of my understanding. But in the present case, of which I am speaking, there is no means of doing this; for we must behold it, *when* and *how* our Lord is pleased to represent it to us, and as he wishes; nor can we diminish or add anything, nor use any means for this purpose, however much we may endeavor to do so, either towards our seeing it or forbearing to see it when we wish: and if we should desire to behold any particular object, the sight of Christ is instantly lost. For two years and a half our Lord was very ordinarily pleased to grant me this

favor (which for more than three years He has changed for another of a higher kind, as I shall perhaps mention afterwards); and then seeing how He would be speaking to me, while I was beholding His great beauty, and the sweetness with which He uttered those words, with His most lovely and divine mouth, and sometimes with rigor, I had a great desire to see the color of His eyes, and their size and shape, that so I might be able to describe them; but never have I deserved to behold them, nor could I gain my object by any diligence, but rather the vision was then entirely lost. And though sometimes I see He looks upon me with compassion, yet the sight is so overpowering that the soul is not able to endure it, but remains in so high a rapture, that in order to enjoy Him the more completely, she loses this beautiful spectacle.

Here it serves to little purpose, either to will or not to will anything; and it is clearly seen, that our Lord desires nothing but our humility and confusion, and willingness to take whatever is given us, and to praise Him who gives it. This holds good in all *true* visions, without exception, viz., that one can do nothing at all, either for seeing more or less, and that all our diligence is neither able to do nor undo anything, because our Lord wishes us to see very clearly, that this is no work of ours, but belongs to His Majesty; and hence we are so far from being proud by such favors, that they rather make us more humble and timorous, considering that as our Lord deprives us of the power of seeing what we desire, so He can also take all these favors from us, and His grace too, in such a manner that we may come to be utterly lost: we must, therefore, always walk in fear, as long as we live in this land of exile.

Our Lord has almost always represented Himself to me as risen again, and the same in the Sacred Host; except that sometimes, in order to strengthen me when I am in tribulation, He showed me His wounds, as He was on the cross, or in the garden; and a few times He appeared with His crown of thorns, and at other times carrying His cross: these happened, as I have said, only when I was in some trouble either of my own or from some other persons: but our Lord always appeared in His glorified flesh. By men-

tioning these things I have suffered many affronts and vexations, and great persecutions and fears. People were even so certain that I was under the influence of the devil, that some persons wished me to be *exorcised*. This, however, gave me very little trouble; but what I felt the most was, to see my confessors afraid of hearing my confession, or when I came to know that tales were told to them about me. Still, on the whole, I know not how to be sorry for having seen these heavenly visions; nor would I exchange any one of them for all the goods and pleasures of the world, for I always considered these "visions" to be great favors from our Lord, and I esteem them as most precious treasures, and our Lord himself has often assured me of this. I also observed, that thereby I began to love our Lord the more, and to Him I went to complain of all my troubles, and always I came forth from prayer both with comfort and with new strength. As to these persons, I did not presume to contradict them, for I saw it made things worse, as they seemed to think it was want of humility; I consulted my confessor, and whenever he found me afflicted, he always consoled me greatly.

As my visions began to increase, one of those who used before to assist me, and sometimes hear my confessions when my ordinary confessor was not in the way, began to tell me I was evidently deluded by the devil. He commanded me (since there was no other means of resisting him), "always to be crossing and blessing myself, when I saw any vision, and to use some sign of scorn, because it was certainly the devil, and by this means he would come no more: and that I need not fear but that God would preserve me, and take him away from me." This command was very painful to me, because, as I could not help believing my prayer came from God, it was a terrible thing for me to use any act of scorn; neither could I desire these things should be taken away from me: still I did all that was commanded me. I earnestly besought our Lord to free me from being deceived; and this I did continually, and with abundance of tears: I also prayed to St. Peter and St. Paul: for as I had the first vision on their festival, our Lord told me that they would take such care of me that I should not be deceived: and

accordingly I have often seen very clearly, though not by the way of any "imaginary" vision, these two glorious saints on my left hand, as my good patrons.

But this making signs of contempt gave me excessive trouble, when I saw this vision of our Lord. For when I saw Him present before me, I could not be induced to believe it was the devil, even though I should have been torn in pieces, and therefore it was a severe kind of penance. But in order that I might not be so perpetually blessing myself, I took a cross in my hands: and this I did almost always. But I did not use the signs of scorn so often, for this would have afflicted me too much; for I remembered the injuries the Jews inflicted on our Lord, and so I besought Him to pardon me, since I acted in obedience to those whom he had appointed in His own place, and not to blame me, since they were the ministers whom He had placed in His Church. He told me "not to be troubled at this, and that I did well in obeying them, and that He would make them understand the truth." But when they forbade me the use of mental prayer, our Lord appeared angry at it, and told me to tell them "This was tyranny." He also gave me reasons to understand that I was not deceived by the devil, as I shall relate afterwards.

When once I was holding the cross in my hand, which was at the end of my Rosary, He took it into His hand, and when He returned it to me, it consisted of four great stones, incomparably more precious than diamonds,—for there is nothing here below that can equal the supernatural: a diamond is but an imperfect kind of stone in comparison with those precious stones seen here. They had on them the five wounds in a most curious manner. And our Lord told me I should see Him just in that way henceforth, and so I did. and now I no longer saw the matter of which the cross was made, but only these precious stones; no one saw them so but myself.

When I was commanded to make these trials, and to resist the favors, they increased much more; and though I should wish to turn my attention to something else, yet I never omitted prayer: nay, it seems that I was in prayer even while I was asleep, for here the love of our Lord was much

increased, and I would then be uttering amorous complaints to Him; nor was it in my power, though I had desired it, and least of all when I endeavored, to leave off thinking of Him: still I obeyed as well as I could, though I was able to do little or nothing therein. Our Lord never freed me from obeying them; but though He commanded me to do as they bade me, He gave me confidence on the other side, and taught me what I should say to them: and this He does now, giving me such convincing reasons as to make me wholly secure.

Not long after this, His Majesty began to perform what He had been pleased to promise me before,—to assure me more strongly that it was He; for there grew in me so great a love for God, that I knew not who infused it into me, for it was of a very supernatural kind; nor did I procure it. I found myself dying through a desire of seeing God, and I knew not how or where to seek or find this life, but by the way of death. There came upon me such great impetuosities of this love, that I knew not what to do with myself, though they were not so insupportable, nor of such value as those I have mentioned in another place; for nothing could satisfy me, nor was I able to contain myself, but rather it seemed as if my soul were really torn from my body. O admirable artifice of our Lord! What delicate industry dost Thou use with this miserable slave of Thine! Thou didst hide Thyself from me, and yet even then Thou didst press upon me by Thy love, bringing on me such a sweet kind of death, as the soul would never wish to be free from. Whoever has not experienced these great impetuosities cannot understand them; for this is not a kind of restlessness of the breast, nor like certain devotions which sometimes are wont to choke the soul, so that she can hardly contain herself. This is a more inferior kind of prayer, and therein we must endeavor to remove these impetuosities, by striving with sweetness to make them recollected within themselves, so as to calm the soul. It is something like when little children cry so much as to seem to be choking, and when they have something to drink, then their excessive weeping ceases. And so in this case also, reason should take the bridle in the hand; for perhaps the very natural constitution of the person himself may be the thing, which in some degree contributes to this state of mind.

And therefore let consideration be used, for fear lest all should not be perfect, and the greater part might prove to have something sensual in it. And let this child be stilled by some caress of love, which may induce the soul to love by a gentle and sweet kind of way, and not by blows, as the saying is. This love should be kept recollected within, and not be like a pot which is suffered to boil over, because wood is piled on the fire without discretion. They should rather slake and appease the flame which is fed by that vehement fire with sweet and gentle tears, but not with such as are forced or painful, as they are wont to be which proceed from those sentiments I spoke of before, and which do much harm. Such I myself had in the beginning; and they always left my head so disordered, and my soul so wearied, that sometimes I was not able for several days to return to the exercise of prayer. We should therefore use great discretion at the beginning, in order that everything may go on with sweetness, and the soul may be taught the way of exercising herself interiorly; we must also endeavor as much as we can that the exterior may be avoided.

Those other impetuosities and impulses are of a very different kind, for here it is not we who lay the wood, but the fire seems to be made quite ready to our hands, and we are instantly ready to cast ourselves into it, that so we may be consumed. The soul does not endeavor to make herself feel the wound which is made in her by the absence of our Lord, but they sometimes drive an arrow into the very inmost part of the heart, so that the soul knows not what is the matter nor what she desires, though she understands very well that she desires and loves God; and that this same arrow seems to be touched and rubbed over with some herb, to make her abhor herself for the love of this Lord; she would willingly lose her life for His sake. It is not in our power to express or relate the manner whereby God approaches such a soul, or the excessive pain it causes, which makes her not know what to do with herself; but yet this pain is so sweet, that there is nothing in this life which can give her so much delight. As I have said, the soul would be glad to be always dying of this disease.

This pain and joy together did so distract me, that I knew

not how they both could possibly subsist! Oh! what a thing it is to see a soul so wounded! It is just in such a way that we may well say she is "wounded," and this for a very excellent reason, for she sees very clearly that she herself did contribute nothing whereby this love could come, but only that it seems some spark suddenly falls down upon her, from that immense love our Lord has for her, which sets her all on fire! Oh! how often, when I am in this state, do I remember these words of David: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, my God." (Psalm xli.) Methinks that then these words are literally fulfilled in me. Whenever this feeling does not come on me violently, it seems to me that I can appease it a little, at least the soul endeavors to find some remedy (for she knows not what to do), by the performance of certain penances: but they are felt by her no more, nor does it put her to any more pain to shed her blood, than if the body were dead. She seeks modes and ways to do something, whereby she may suffer for the love of God; but so great is her former grief which she feels, that I know not of any corporal torment which can remove it; for the remedy thereof does not consist in any such things, since these medicines are too mean for so spiritual a malady. The soul, indeed, finds some little ease by these means, and by begging the remedy of her misery at the hands of God, though none she sees, but death; for by this she hopes entirely to enjoy her sovereign good. At other times, this pain afflicts the soul so severely, that neither this nor anything else can be done, for it pierces the body through and through, and she can stir neither her feet nor hands; nay, even if she were standing, she feels like one transported, for she cannot so much as breathe: she utters only sighs, not great in outward appearance, because she cannot express them, but they are deep *interiorly*.

Our Lord was pleased that I should sometimes have the following vision: I saw an angel very near me, on my left side, in a corporeal form, which is not usual with me; for though angels are often represented to me, yet it is without my seeing them, except by that kind of vision of which I have already spoken. But in this vision, our Lord was pleased I should see the angel in this form. He was not

tall, but rather little, and very beautiful; his face was so inflamed, that he seemed to be one of those glorious spirits who appear to be all on fire (with divine love). He might be one of those who are called Seraphim, for they do not tell their names; but I see clearly, that in heaven there is so great a difference between some angels and others, that I am not able to express it. I saw that he had a long golden dart in his hand, and at the point there seemed to me to be a little fire: I thought that he pierced my heart with this dart several times, and in such a manner that it went through my very bowels; and when he drew it out, it seemed as if my bowels came with it, and I remained wholly inflamed with a great love of God. The pain thereof was so intense, that it forced deep groans from me; but the sweetness which this extreme pain caused in me was so excessive, that there was no desiring to be free from it; nor is the soul then content with anything less than God. This is not a corporal but a *spiritual* pain, though the body does not fail to participate a little in it, yea, a great deal. It is so delightful an intercourse between the soul and God, that I beseech His goodness to give some taste of it to him who may imagine I do not tell the truth.

During the time I was in this state, I went up and down like one transported; I wished neither to see nor to speak, but only to be consumed by my pain, which was a greater happiness for me than any that can be found in creatures. In this state I continued some time, when our Lord was pleased I should fall into such great raptures, that I was not able to resist them, even in the presence of secular persons; and so, to my great grief, they began to be public. But, from the time I began to have these raptures, I have not felt this pain so much as that other of which I spoke before, though I cannot call to mind the particular chapter. But that pain is different in many respects, and more valuable than this; then, it seems, as if our Lord forcibly carries away the soul, and puts her in an ecstacy, so that there is no room for feeling any pain, because the enjoyment comes immediately. May He be blessed forever, who bestows such high favors on one who corresponds so little with such great benefits.

CHAPTER XXX.

SHE RESUMES THE HISTORY OF HER LIFE, AND MENTIONS HOW OUR LORD REMEDIED MANY OF HER TROUBLES BY MEANS OF ST. PETER OF ALCANTARA, ETC.

WHEN I observed the little or nothing I was able to effect towards resisting these great impetuositities, I began to fear my having them; for I could not understand how it was possible that pain and joy could be united; that corporal pain and spiritual joy were compatible, I knew very well; but that so excessive a spiritual pain should be compatible with so extraordinary a spiritual joy, did quite astonish me. Still, I did not omit resisting it, though yet I had such little power in this respect, that I sometimes grew weary. I armed myself with the cross, with the desire of defending myself from Him, who by His death, defended and succored us all. I saw that no one understood me, though I dared not say so to any one but my confessor, for then people would have had some reason to say that I had no humility.

Our Lord was pleased to remedy a great part of my trouble, and for that time all of it, by bringing to Avila that blessed man, Father Peter of Alcantara, of whom I have already made mention, and said something of his austerities: among other things I was assured, that for twenty years he continually wore a garment of iron plate, in the form of a hair-cloth. He is the author of certain little books of prayer in Spanish, which are now much used; for as he was well versed in prayer, he wrote very profitably on it, and gave excellent rules to those who practiced it. He observed the first rule of St. Francis in all its rigor, and did other things which I have mentioned before. When, then, a certain widow lady who was a great servant of God, and a particular friend of mine, came to know that so great a man was there: and as she was also aware of my troubles (for she was witness of my afflictions, and had comforted me on several occasions, because her faith was so great, that she could not help believing I was directed by the spirit of God, though all others thought I was deceived by the devil: she had like-

wise, a very good understanding, and was very cautious in her words, and knew how to keep a secret; and to her our Lord was pleased to show great favors in prayer, and to give her a knowledge of those things, of which they who were learned were ignorant), my confessors gave me leave to treat with her on some matters, for she understood them in many ways, and sometimes she herself enjoyed part of those very favors which our Lord had bestowed upon me, together with having received certain instructions and admonitions which were very profitable to her soul. Without saying anything to me, she got leave from my Provincial that I might remain in her house for eight days, in order to be able the better to consult this holy man; and so, both there and in several churches I spoke with him often, on this first occasion of his coming to Avila; for afterwards I corresponded with him on many occasions. Having given him a short account of my life and manner of prayer, with the greatest possible clearness, I found almost at the very first that he understood me by experience, which was indeed the *only* thing I stood in need of at that time; for then I could not so well understand those things, at least so far as to express them. I have always endeavored, however, to treat in truth and sincerity with those to whom I committed the care of my soul: I also wished to make known to them even the first motions of my heart; and, as regards those things which might, in any way be doubtful or suspicious, I was wont to discuss them against myself with strong reasons; hence I laid open my soul without any disguise or duplicity. Since that time, our Lord has been pleased to make me understand and to express the favors which His Majesty bestows upon me: but before, it was necessary to have a person who had experienced these things, if I wished him perfectly to understand me, and to declare to me what was the meaning of everything.

This good Father gave me very great light, for I could not by any means understand what those "visions" meant, which were not represented by the imagination; and I thought also that I understood as little of those others, which I saw only with the eyes of my soul; for, as I have said before, those only which were visible to the corporeal eye,

seemed to me to be of any value ; and of these I had received none at all. But this holy man enlightened me in everything, and explained all things to me, and bade me not to be troubled, but to bless God, and be assured I was directed by His Spirit : and that, though it was no article of faith, yet nothing could be more certainly true, nor which I might more firmly believe. He seemed to feel much comfort in being with me, and he showed me every courtesy and kindness, and ever afterwards took great care of me, and communicated his affairs to me. Finding, also, that I had the same desires which he had already put into execution, and that I was likewise full of courage (for our Lord had given me great resolution), he took particular pleasure in speaking with me. Whenever our Lord brings any one to this state, there is no pleasure or comfort which can be equal to meeting with such another person, to whom our Lord has given some beginnings of this same disposition ; for then I had not much more than a beginning, by what I can remember ; and God grant that I may have it yet. He had also very great compassion for me, and he told me, that one of the greatest afflictions of this life was that which I endured, viz., the contradiction of good men ; and that there was still a great deal for me to suffer, because I should always have need of help, and there was no one in that city who understood me, but that he would speak with my confessor, and with one of those also who gave me the most trouble, and this was that married gentleman, of whom I spoke before ; and, because he had a great esteem for me, he attacked me the most : he was, however, a man of a tender and holy soul ; and, considering that lately before he had found out how wicked I was, he could not rest satisfied or secure. The holy man did as he said, for he spoke with those two persons, and gave them reasons and proofs to show they need not be uneasy, and that it was proper not to harass me any more. My confessor needed few reasons, but the other gentleman so many, that these were not altogether sufficient, though yet they served to deter him from terrifying me so much.

We agreed that I should send Father Peter an account of the success I might meet with, from that time forward, and frequently to recommend one another to God ; for so deep

was his humility, that he valued a little the prayers of this miserable creature, and this gave me great confusion. He left me in possession of very great comfort and joy, and told me to continue my prayer in security, and to make no doubt that it came from God ; but that whenever I was in any doubt, I should, for my own greater security, mention whatever happened to my confessor, and that then I might consider myself safe. But, notwithstanding all this, I could not rest so entirely secure, because our Lord was still pleased to conduct me by the way of fear, so that I was inclined to believe my prayer came from the devil, when people told me that it was so ; and thus no one was able to give me either so much fear or so much security, as to make me give more credit to either of them, than our Lord was pleased to infuse into my soul. Hence, though this holy man both helped and consoled me, yet I did not believe him so entirely, as to be without any fear at all, especially when our Lord sometimes, left me in troubles of mind, as I shall now relate ; but as I was saying, I nevertheless enjoyed much comfort.

I could not then satisfy myself with giving thanks to God, and to my glorious Father St. Joseph, who, I thought, had brought the good Father to Avila ; for he was commissary-general of the convent of St. Joseph, to whom I used frequently to recommend myself, as also to our Blessed Lady. It sometimes happened to me (and so it does still, though not so often), to find myself in such excessive troubles of mind, joined with such violent pains and torments of the body, that I knew not what to do with myself. At other times, I have been subject to corporal miseries, yet more grievous, but as I had not then such sorrows of mind, I endured them with great joy ; but when they came both together, the affliction was so great that it pained me exceedingly.

I then forgot all the favors our Lord had bestowed upon me : there only remained such a remembrance of them, as of something I had dreamt ; and this only served to give me so much more pain, for the understanding becomes dull to such a degree, that it made me fall into a thousand doubts and suspicions, thinking that I had not understood matters well before, and that, perhaps, I had followed fancies

instead of truths, and that it was enough to be deceived myself, without trying to deceive so many good men. I also seemed to myself to be so very wicked, that methought all the evils and heresies which had lately sprung up were owing to my sins. This was a false kind of humility, which the devil invented to disquiet me, and to try if he could bring my soul into despair · and I know so well by experience that this is the work of the devil, that now, as he finds I understand him, he does not so often torment me in this way, as he was accustomed to do.

This temptation is easily discovered, by the restlessness and disquiet with which it begins, and by the tumult which it causes in the soul all the time it lasts; likewise, by the obscurity and trouble which it produces, and by a dryness and indisposition to prayer, or to any good at all; for it seems both to stifle the soul and to bind up the body, so that it is fit for nothing. But true humility (though the soul knows herself to be wicked, and is grieved in considering what we are, and exaggerates her wickedness as greatly as I have already mentioned, and through these her sins are felt to be such)—comes not with any disorder, nor does it disturb the soul, or overcloud her, or cause in her any aridity; but rather comforts her, and proceeds in a quite contrary way, with gentleness, sweetness, and delight; for, though she is troubled on one hand, yet she is comforted on the other, to see what a great favor our Lord bestows upon her, in allowing her to feel that pain, and in considering how well employed it is. She grieves, indeed, for having offended God, but then, on the other hand, his mercy cheers her up, and she has light to be confounded at herself, and to praise His Majesty for having borne with her so long. But in that other humility which the devil suggests, there is no light for anything that is good, but it seems to the soul as if God were ready to put every one to fire and the sword. He represents the divine justice to her, and though she has faith in God's mercy, because the devil has no power to destroy that, yet, she believes in such a manner, that her faith gives her no comfort; but rather when she considers God's great mercy, the tempter makes this serve for her greater torment,

because she thinks she ought to have served God so much the more.

This is a stratagem of the devil, and one of the most painful, the most subtle, and disguised that I have ever known, and therefore I wish your Reverence (lest, perhaps, he might endeavor to tempt you in this way) to gain some light, and to know him well, if he leave you understanding enough to do so; but do not fancy that knowledge and learning will be sufficient for this purpose; for, though I want all this, yet, now as I have escaped from him, I clearly see that what he says is foolery and madness. I am sensible that our Lord is pleased to permit this temptation, and allow him leave to act thus, just as he tempted Job; though, as I am so wicked a creature, He does not suffer the enemy to tempt me with so much fierceness.

It happened to me once, and I remember it was on the day preceding the Eve of Corpus Christi, a festival to which I am much devoted, though not so much as I ought to be; at that time this following event lasted but one day, but at other times it lasted for a week or a fortnight, and sometimes for three weeks or more, especially during Holy Week, which used to be my delight, in point of prayer. Methinks on these occasions, our Lord surprises my understanding in an instant with certain things, sometimes so very trivial, that at other times I would only have laughed at them, and He makes it stoop to whatever He pleases, so that the soul remains chained to it, without being mistress of herself, or being able to think of anything, except those impertinencies which the temptation represents, and which have no substance at all, but serve only to choke the soul in such a manner, as not to allow her to be mistress of herself, hence I sometimes have thought, that the devil goes playing with a soul, as men would do with a ball, and she in the mean time has no means of delivering herself from their power. It cannot be expressed how much she suffers in this case; and though she goes and seeks for some remedy, God permits her not to find any. She only retains,—and this she always does,—the power of her free will, though it is not clear, but like a man who has his eyes shut. And just as a person who has frequently gone along the same way, who, though it were by

night in the dark, yet knows where he may be in danger of stumbling, because he had noticed the same path in the daytime, and thus he walks free from that danger; so it happens to the soul, which now seems, merely through custom, not to offend God: I speak not here of that protection our Lord gives her, which, however, is of the greatest importance.

Her faith then becomes dead, or, at least asleep; as her other virtues also are, though yet they are not utterly lost, for she believes what the Church teaches, and she pronounces it with her mouth; while on the other side, the devil so harasses and deadens this faith, that she seems only to have such a knowledge of God as men have of things which they hear at a distance. Her love, also, is so lukewarm, that if she hears God spoken of, she hearkens in such a manner as to believe He is what He is, because the Church teaches the doctrine, but she has lost all memory of what she has experienced in herself. To go and pray, or remain in solitude, is only to increase her affliction, for the torment which she then feels within herself, and yet without knowing the cause, is, in my opinion, insupportable; it is a kind of picture of hell, as our Lord himself was once pleased to make me understand, in a vision He gave me. Here the soul burns within herself, without knowing by whom, or by what means she is set on fire, or how to escape from it, or how to quench it; for, as to seeking to help herself by reading, it is like as if she could not read. I happened one day to read the life of a saint, to see if I could relish it, and thus comfort myself by the consideration of what he suffered; accordingly I read half a dozen lines four or five times over, but though everything was written in my own tongue, I understood the account less at the end than I did at the beginning, and so I gave over reading. This happened to me many times, and I remember it particularly.

To engage in conversation at that time is much worse, for the devil fills us then with such an unbearable spirit of anger, that it seems as if I could devour every one, without doing anything more; yea, and methinks I act well in forbearing to do it; and that God shows him who is placed in this circumstance a particular favor, by preserving him from doing

or saying anything against his neighbor, whereby he might prejudice him and offend God.

As to going to my confessor, what I shall here relate is certain, for it has happened to me very often, viz., that though they were saints with whom I treated at that time, and do still consult, yet they uttered such harsh words, and rebuked me with such asperity, that when I afterwards repeated their words they themselves would be amazed at them: and they told me it was not in their power to do otherwise. For though they fully resolved within themselves not to do it, and at other times had not only compassion on me, but even a kind of scruple to treat me so severely, when I was so full of affliction both in body and mind; and though they had resolved to comfort me with kindness, yet they were not able to do it. They did not, however, use such ill language towards me as to offend God thereby, but they would use words as offensive as could be heard from a confessor, intending thereby to mortify me; and though at other times I could have endured this with joy, yet then it became a torment to me. Sometimes I thought I had deceived them, and then I would go to them, and advise them in good earnest, to be on their guard against me, lest I might deceive them. I knew well, however, that I would not wilfully deceive them, nor tell a lie; but the truth is, I was afraid of everything. There was a certain person, who, having heard of this temptation of mine, advised me not to be troubled at it, for though I should *wish* to deceive him, yet that he would have sense enough not to let me.

That which often gave me great comfort, at least most frequently, was, that I used to have some respite after I had communicated, and sometimes in the very instant of approaching the Blessed Sacrament, I became so perfectly well, both in soul and body, that it amazed me; for it seemed that all the darkness of my soul was dispersed in a moment, and that upon the rising of this Sun, I immediately discovered those fooleries wherein I was engaged. At other times, by hearing only one word which our Lord spoke to me interiorly, such as "Be not afraid," or "Be not afflicted," I remained perfectly well; and sometimes also by seeing some vision I became as if nothing ailed me. I then regaled my-

self with God, and complained to Him for permitting me to suffer such great torments, though He repaid me well, because these afflictions were always followed with a great abundance of favors. Methinks the soul here comes, like gold, more pure and refined out of the crucible, by seeing our Lord within her; and then all those troubles are accounted little which before seemed insupportable, and she desires to suffer them again, if our Lord could be served the better by them, and even to endure still greater persecutions and tribulations, provided they could be endured without offending God: she rather rejoices to suffer for Him, since all tends to her own greater gain, though I never did bear them as I ought, but very imperfectly. At other times, troubles came upon me in another way, and this too so suddenly, that methinks I am then deprived of the possibility of thinking anything good, or of desiring to do it, for that I have a body and a soul which are utterly useless and burdensome. But at these times I am not subject to these other temptations and disquiets, but only to a disgust for all things, without knowing why, so that nothing can give content to my soul.

I endeavor on these occasions to occupy myself by the outward performance of some good works, and these I do as it were by force; and I know well how little a soul can do when God's grace is hidden from her: but this does not give me trouble, for it gives me some satisfaction to behold my own baseness. At other times I find myself in such a state that I am utterly unable to form any distinct idea of God, nor indeed of any good in a solid manner; nor can I then apply myself to prayer, though I am alone, and am sensible I know God. But I find it is my understanding and imagination which injure me on these occasions, for my will I think is good, and is disposed to all good: but this understanding of mine is so entirely lost, that it seems to me like some mad fool whom no one can bind, nor am I so far mistress of it as to make it quiet even for a few minutes. Sometimes I laugh at myself, and acknowledge my misery, and look at my soul and allow her to do what she likes: but thanks be to God, she never, for a wonder, applies to what is bad, but only to things indifferent, if anything is to be done here or there or anywhere. And here I know better

the exceeding great mercy our Lord shows me, when he holds this fool (the imagination) bound in perfect contemplation. I consider, also, what would become of me, if those persons who consider me to be good were to see me in the state I have described.

I have great pity on the soul to see her in such bad company. I wish to see her at liberty, and thus I speak to our Lord: "When, O my God! shall I be able to see my soul united in singing Thy praises, that so all her powers may enjoy Thee? Permit her not, O Lord, any more to be torn in pieces, for now it seems as if every one of them were running up and down in different ways." Such words I often repeat; and sometimes I know well that the little corporal health I have, contributes much to these inconveniences. I also reflect much on the injury which original sin brought upon us; for methinks it comes from this that we are incapable of enjoying so great a good, and that my own sins likewise form a part of this cause; for if I had not committed so many, I should have remained more free in doing good. I also endured another very great inconvenience, for I thought that I understood all the books which treat of prayer, and which I read; and that as our Lord had already shown me such favors, I did not stand in need of these books, but applied myself to reading the lives of the Saints. And finding how much I fell short of what they had done for God, this seemed to do me good, and to give me strength: but yet I thought this was a sign of little humility, that I should fancy I had already arrived at that degree of prayer. And as I was not able to compose myself, I continued in great pain, till certain learned men, and especially that blessed Father Peter of Alcantara, declared to me that I was not to be troubled thereat. I know well that I have not yet so much as begun to serve God, though by His Majesty conferring favors on me is what He does to those who are good; and yet I am imperfection itself, unless in my desires to love Him; for in this respect I see well that our Lord has favored me, in order that I may be able to do something to serve Him. I certainly think I love Him: but my actions, and the many imperfections I discover in myself, give me great uneasiness. At other times my

soul falls into a kind of foolery : this is the case when I think I neither do good nor ill, but follow on the track of other people, as the saying is ; and this neither with pain, nor with glory, nor with thought of life or death, nor with pleasure, nor with pain : she even seems to feel nothing at all : rather, she appears to go on like a little ass, which feeds himself because they give him something to eat ; and he eats almost without thinking what he is doing. And the soul, when she is in this state, cannot be without feeding on some great favors from God, since she is not troubled with living in such a miserable life as this, but passes through it with patience and equality of mind. But these feelings and effects are not experienced by her in such a way that she can understand herself by them.

It now seems to me as when men sail at sea by the breath of a very gentle wind, for then they move along without knowing how ; and so in these other cases the effects are so very great, that the soul almost instantly perceives her own improvement, and her desires immediately rise up, and never can she satisfy herself. They experience these great impetuosities of love to whom our Lord gives them ; and it is like certain little springs which I have observed to rise, where the sand never ceases to move upwards. This comparison seems natural to me, as applicable to souls who have arrived at this state ; love is ever boiling upwards and considering what it can do ; it cannot contain itself, just as the water is not able to remain in the earth, but is cast up from it ; and so it is very usual with the soul not to be at rest in herself, through the love she has for God, with which she is so full that she wishes all other men would drink of it (since she herself has abundance) ; that so they might assist her in singing the praises of God. Oh ! how often do I call to mind that living water of which our Saviour spoke to the Samaritan woman !* I am very fond of reading that part of the Gospel containing the account : it is very true that I was so even from my childhood, though I did not then understand the benefit as I do now ; but I often besought our Lord to give me this water to drink, and I had

* The Saint speaks more at length on this "living water" in her "Way of Perfection," already translated.

a representation of it always near me, with this motto : " O Lord, give me this water." It seems to me likewise, that as a fire which is very great requires fuel to burn, in order not to be extinguished ; so for these souls of which I am speaking, it is necessary that they bring wood, however dear it may cost them, in order that this fire may not go out. But I am such a miserable creature myself, that I would be content if I had only straws to cast in. And so it often happens to me, that sometimes I laugh, and at other times I am in great affliction. An interior impulse which I have is ever exciting me to serve God in something (since I am not capable of doing great things), such as by gathering flowers, and making bouquets, and placing them around images and pictures, or by sweeping a room, and doing such like little offices which might humble me. And so also if I did any penance, it was all so very little, and so imperfectly done, that unless our Lord had been pleased to accept the *desire* for the deed, I saw clearly that I was good for nothing ; and I quite laughed at myself. Again : it gives no small trouble to souls whom God in His goodness abundantly fills with this fire of His love, if they have no corporal strength to do something for Him. This is indeed a great affliction, because as strength is wanting to carry wood to this fire, it seems to me that the soul burns herself to ashes, or else dissolves into tears, and so is entirely consumed : this is a severe torment, though indeed it is sweet.

Let the soul who has arrived at this state praise our Lord exceedingly ; and if He have given her corporal strength to do penance, or learning and talents, and power to preach, and hear confessions, and bring souls to God, she knows not nor understands the great benefit she possesses, unless she feel what an affliction it is always to be receiving so much from God, and yet to be unable to do anything for His service. May He be blessed by all men, and may the angels give him glory and honor. Amen.

I know not whether I do well in writing about so many little things ; but since your Reverence has commanded me not to consider it any trouble to go into details, and that I must be sure to omit nothing, I have mentioned everything which I can remember with clearness and with truth. I

cannot help, however, omitting many other things, the recital of which would take much more time (and you know I have but little at my command, as I have mentioned already); and when I had related them, they would perhaps be of little benefit to you.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SHE TREATS OF CERTAIN EXTERIOR TEMPTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DEVIL, ETC.

As I have already spoken of some interior and secret temptations which the devil brought on me, so now I wish to speak of others which were in some manner public, and in which one could not be ignorant that the evil spirit was the agent.

I was once in a certain oratory, when he appeared to me on my left side, in an abominable figure. I observed his mouth in particular while he spoke to me, and it was most terrible; for it seemed to me that a very great flame came out of his body. He told me in a terrible manner, "that though I had escaped his hands, yet he would bring me back again." I was exceedingly terrified, but I blessed myself as well as I could, and he vanished away: but presently he returned again: this happened to me twice, and I knew not what to do. But as I had some "holy water" near me, I threw it towards the place where he was, and he never returned more. Another time he was for five hours together tormenting me with terrible pains, joined with such interior and exterior disquiet, that it seemed impossible for me to endure it. The women who were then with me were astonished to see what passed; but they knew not what to do, nor could I help myself. My custom is, when any corporal sickness or pain is very intolerable, to make certain acts of resignation within myself, as well as I can, beseeching our Lord that His Majesty may be pleased to give me patience, and that I may so suffer, if He please, even until the end of the world. Whenever then I found myself suffering with

so much pain, I helped myself by making some such acts and resolutions, that so I might bear it the better. Our Lord was pleased I should understand that I was tempted by the devil, for I saw near me a very horrible little negro, gnashing his teeth like one raging mad, as if he had lost something which he hoped to have gained. As soon as I saw him, I laughed, and showed no fear at all, for there were some persons near who knew not what to do with me in this case, nor what remedy to apply for so great a torment; for the blows he made me give myself were very severe, and I had no power at all to resist him; and what was still worse, I felt so great inward disquiet, that I could in no way find any rest: neither did I dare to ask for "holy water," lest I should terrify those who were present, or let them know what the matter was. I have often found by experience, that there is nothing from which the devils fly more quickly, and return not again, than from "holy water;" they fly also from a cross, but return again immediately. Certainly, the power of "holy water" must be great; for my part, my soul feels a particular comfort in taking it; and very generally a refreshment and interior delight which I cannot express, and which comforts my whole soul. This is no fancy, or a thing which has happened to me only once; it has happened very often, and been observed by me with great attention. It seems like as if a person, who was suffering with heat and thirst, should drink a glass of cold water, which would greatly refresh him. I consider also, that whatever is ordained by the Church is of much importance; and it is a subject of great delight to me, that those words which the Church uses when she blesses the water, should be so powerful in making such a difference between blessed and unblessed water. I told those who were present, as my torment did not cease, that if they would not laugh at me, I would beg some "holy water" of them. They brought me some, and sprinkled me with it, but it did me no good: I sprinkled some myself in the place where the devil was, and in an instant he departed, and all my pains went away also, as if some one had removed them with his hand, except that I found myself as tired as if I had been severely beaten. I afterwards considered, that if the devil, when our Lord permits him, is able to do so much mischief

to us in body and soul, even when we are not his, what will he do to *them* who shall fall entirely into his power! This consideration gave me fresh desires to be free from such ill company.

Another time, and that very lately, the same thing happened to me when I was alone, though it did not last long; then also I drove the devil away by "holy water." Two nuns who came into the room after he had departed, said that they smelt a very disagreeable stench, as of brimstone; and these persons were well worthy of credit, for on no account would they tell an untruth; I myself, however, did not smell anything, though I was told that the smell continued so long that others might have perceived it. Another time I was in the choir, when I fell into a state of deep recollection, and I went away lest others might perceive it; but all the nuns who were near, heard great blows given in the place where I was kneeling, I also heard persons talking near me, as if they were debating about some business, though I understood not the conversation, for I was so fixed in prayer that I understood nothing, neither had I any fear. This used to happen almost every time when our Lord did me the favor to confer a benefit on some soul or other by my advice. It is certain that something happened to me once, which I shall now relate; and there are many witnesses of it, especially my present confessor, for he read it in a letter without my telling him who the person was that wrote the letter, though he knew well who the individual was.

A certain person came to me, who had lived about two years and a half in a most abominable mortal sin; and during all that period he neither confessed it, nor reformed himself, but yet he presumed to say mass. And though he confessed his other sins, yet respecting that one he used to say to himself, "How can I ever confess so foul a crime!" Still he was desirous of freeing himself from it, but knew not how. I took great compassion on him, and was grieved to see God offended in such a way. I promised him to beg of God to grant him some remedy, and that I would prevail on others also to do the same, who were much better than myself. I accordingly wrote to a certain person about him, sending my letter by the individual himself: and it so happened that by this first letter he confessed his sin; and thus

God was pleased, by the prayers of these very holy persons (I also, miserable sinner that I am, not failing to beg this favor the best I could), to extend His mercy to this soul. The individual wrote to inform me, that he was already so far reformed, that some days had passed in which he had not returned to the sin, but that the torment which the temptation caused was so great, that he considered himself to be in a kind of hell, and therefore that I must still recommend him to God. Upon this I again recommended him to my sisters, by whose prayers our Lord was pleased to do me the favor, for they took the matter exceedingly to heart. No one could guess who the person was : and I besought His Majesty to lessen his torments and temptations, and that those devils might come and torment *me*, provided that I might not offend our Lord in anything. And it is quite true that, shortly after this, I endured most grievous torments for a month ; and these two afflictions which I have mentioned happened at that time. But our Lord was pleased, as I have since learnt, that the devils should not afflict that person any more : his soul was strengthened and became quite free, so that he could not be satisfied with giving thanks to our Lord, and to me also, as if I had done anything : the conviction, however, which he had, that our Lord sometimes bestowed favors on me, might have been of some benefit to him. He used to say, that whenever he found himself greatly assaulted, he was accustomed to read my letters, and that then the temptation immediately left him. He was much amazed to hear what I suffered, and the manner how he himself came to be free. May our Lord be praised by all men ; for the prayers of those who truly serve Him, as I believe my sisters do in this house, can do much : but because I had procured those prayers, the devils were exasperated against me, and our Lord permitted it for my sins. About this time one night I thought they would have strangled me ; but as soon as I had a quantity of "holy water" sprinkled on me, I saw a multitude of them falling, as it were headlong, and running away in despair. So frequently do these cursed spirits torment me, and so little is the fear I now have for them, seeing that they are not so much as able to stir unless our Lord give them

leave, that I should weary your Reverence if I related everything.

What I have already said may serve to show us, that a true servant of God need give himself little trouble about these scarecrows which the devils set up in order to make us fear them : let him be assured that every time they see we despise them they have less strength against us, and the soul acquires more power over them. Some great advantage is also gained, which I will not here relate, lest I should be too tedious. But I will only relate what happened to me at night, on All Souls. Being in an oratory, and having recited matins, and also those other devout prayers which are at the end of them in our Breviary, the devil put himself on the book, that I might not finish the prayer : but I blessed myself, and then he went away. I began again, and he returned again ; and I think the like happened three times ; and until I had thrown some “ holy water ” at him, I could not succeed in driving him away. I saw that some souls were freed from Purgatory at the moment, and that little was wanting for their deliverance ; and I thought that the devil wished to raise some obstacle. It is seldom that I have seen the devil in any particular form, but many times I have seen him without form, as I did a vision ; for as I have mentioned, one sees very clearly that he is there without form : this I wish to relate, because I was greatly astonished thereat.

Being one day in a certain monastery, and in the choir, upon Trinity Sunday, I was in a rapture, and saw a great contention of devils against angels. I knew not at the time what this vision meant ; but before a fortnight I understood the contention, by a great disagreement which happened between some persons who were given to prayer and many others who were not so : and there came a great deal of harm to the house on account of this contention, which continued long, and caused much confusion. At another time I saw a multitude round about me ; but it seemed to me that I was encompassed with a great light, which did not allow them to approach me. I understood by this, that our Lord kept them from coming near me, in such a way that they might not make me offend God. By what I had sometimes found in myself, I understood it was a true vision ; the fact is, that

now I know well what little power they have whenever I go not against God, that I do not fear them at all; for their strength is a mere nothing, unless they find the souls whom they attack to be cowardly, and that they yield to them; *then*, indeed, they show their power. Sometimes in the temptations I have already mentioned, it seems that all the vanities and weaknesses of my former life revive within me, so that I have need to recommend myself frequently to God; then I was presently tormented with the apprehension that all came from the devil, till at last my confessor comforted me; for then it seemed to me, that even *the first motion* of an evil thought ought not to be entertained by one who had received such great favors from our Lord. At other times I am tormented to see myself so much esteemed, and especially now that eminent persons should esteem me so much, and speak such good things of me. In this I have suffered and still suffer much; and presently I consider the life of Christ and of the saints, and methinks I walk in a way very contrary to theirs, because they endured nothing but contempt and injuries. This consideration makes me so fearful, that I can scarcely dare to raise up my head, and would be glad not to be seen: this does not happen to me when I am suffering persecution, however much I may be afflicted in body or mind; for then my soul seems to be mistress in such a way that I know not how it can be, but still she then seems to be in her kingdom, and to tread all things under her feet. This happened sometimes, and lasted many days; and it appeared to me to be virtue and humility, but now I am sensible it was a temptation; and a Dominican Father, who was a learned man, declared this to me very clearly. When I thought that those favors which our Lord was pleased to show me would be publicly known, it was so excessive a torment to me, that it troubled my soul exceedingly. I thought I could more willingly have consented to be buried alive; and so when I began to have those very great recollections and raptures, in such a way that it was impossible for me to resist them, I remained afterwards so confounded with shame, that I wished to be where no one could see me.

Being once extremely afflicted at this, our Lord asked me, "What I was so much afraid of? Only one of these two

things could happen in this matter, viz., either that they would murmur against me, or else that men would praise Him ;” meaning, that they who believed it would praise Him, and that they who did not believe it would condemn me without any fault of mine ; and that as both these things would prove an advantage to me, I had no reason to be thus troubled. These words comforted me very much, and do comfort me still, whenever I call them to mind. The temptation went so far, that I was desirous of leaving this place, and of retiring to some other monastery, which was much more enclosed than that in which I am at present ; and I liked it the more, because I had heard it praised exceedingly. It was also a house of my Order, and very far off, and this it is which comforts me, to be in a place where I am unknown ; but my confessor would never give his consent. These fears greatly deprived me of liberty of spirit, and afterwards I came to understand that this was no good humility, since it gave me so much disquiet : our Lord then taught me this truth, that if I were convinced and assured I had no good whatever in me, but that it all came from God, it would follow, that just as I was not sorry to hear other persons praised, but was rather glad and greatly comforted, that in them God made Himself manifest, so neither should I be sorry that His works should be shown in me also.

I fell also into another extreme, which was to beg of God, making particular prayer for this purpose, that when any person should entertain a good opinion of me, His Majesty would be pleased to declare my sins to him, in order that he might see how, without any merit of mine, it had pleased our Lord to show me favors ; and this I always earnestly desire. My confessor bade me not ask it ; but hitherto, till very lately, if I saw any one who had a very good opinion of me, I made known my sins to him by circumlocutions, or by whatever way I could ; and, by this means, I thought I found ease. A scruple, however, was raised in my mind thereby, for, in my opinion, this proceeded not from humility, but from a temptation. Many persons came to me, and it seemed that I deceived them all ; and they were indeed deceived if they thought there was any good whatever in me ; still, I had no desire to deceive them, nor did I ever intend any such

thing, but our Lord allows it for some object nor would I ever have mentioned any of these matters, even to my confessors, had I not been convinced it was necessary ; otherwise, I should have had great scruples. But now I perceive, that all these fears, and troubles, and excessive humility, do savor of much imperfection, and proceed from a want of mortification ; for a soul perfectly resigned into the hands of God, is no more troubled at being spoken ill of, than well of, if once she is deeply convinced (and our Lord wishes to grant her this grace) that she has nothing at all of herself. But let her confide in Him who imparts this favor, and she will know why He discovers it ; and, in the mean time, let her prepare herself for persecution, for she will certainly meet with it in such an age as this, when our Lord wishes to make it known that He bestows such favors on her. On *one* of such souls a thousand eyes are fixed, whereas there will not be one fixed on a thousand other souls, who act in a different way. There is really much reason to fear, and this ought to have been my fear, for the other was *not* humility but pusillanimity. A soul which God thus permits to be exposed to the eyes of the world, should prepare herself to be a martyr of that same world ; for if she will not die to it, she will die by it.

I see nothing in this world which seems good to me, except that it does not allow the least imperfection in virtuous souls, and thus by means of their murmurs against them, they become more perfect. But there is need of greater fortitude for one who is yet imperfect to walk on in the way of perfection, than even to become a martyr at once. Perfection is not acquired in a short time, unless by some one to whom our Lord, by a particular privilege, may be pleased to grant this favor. But when the world sees a person beginning to wish to be perfect, then it immediately considers him quite perfect, and will notice any fault in him, however trifling, and perhaps will condemn him for that which, in reality, is a virtue ; and the person who condemns him may be accustomed to commit the self-same fault, through a bad habit, judging of others by himself. Thus people wish (as soon as they see an individual resolved to serve God) that he should neither eat nor sleep, nor even draw breath, if

possible ; and the more they esteem such a person, the more apt are they to forget, that however perfect a soul may be, she is still in the body and lives upon the earth, subject to all the miseries thereof, even should she tread the whole world under her feet. Therefore, do I still say, there is need of great courage, because the world wishes a poor soul to fly, which has not yet begun to walk. She has not yet overcome her passions, and still people will expect her to remain in great temptations as firm and as solid as they have read the saints did, after they had been confirmed in grace. Here we have reason to praise God, and, at the same time to be afflicted to the heart, to see so many souls turn back again ; for they know not, poor creatures, what to do for themselves : so, I believe, such would have been my case, if our Lord, in His infinite mercy, had not supported me. Till He did so, out of His own goodness, your Reverence has already seen that I did nothing but rise and fall. I would gladly be able to relate how this happened, because I am persuaded that many souls are deceived in wishing to fly before God gives them wings.

I think I have already made use of this comparison ; but it suits my subject very well, for I find many persons much afflicted on this account. As for instance, when they begin with great desires and resolutions, to go forward in the way of virtue (and some abandon even everything for love thereof, as far as the exterior goes) ; and when they see others more advanced than themselves, and raised by the graces God has bestowed on them to a degree of virtue they cannot attain ; and when they read in books which treat of prayer and contemplation, the means of arriving thereat, and which they find themselves incapable of practicing, then they are afflicted and lose courage. These means are, to care little or nothing about being spoken ill of, but rather to take more pleasure in it than when they praise us ; to have little esteem for honors ; to be disengaged from kindred, and not to be desirous of conversing with them, unless they be people of prayer, and so with regard to many other things of this kind, which must, in my opinion, be given by God, because they appear to me to be supernatural blessings, and very contrary to our natural inclinations. But let them not be

afflicted, but trust in the Lord, that so what they now have in desires, His Majesty may afterwards be pleased to give them in effect by means of prayer, and by doing on their part what they can. It is very necessary for this weak nature of ours, to have great confidence, and not to be dismayed, but to remember, that if we act with courage, we shall come off with victory. And because I have much experience in this matter, I will speak a word or two to your Reverence, by way of advice; and you must not think (though it may appear to be true) that this virtue can be gained, unless we have first experienced the contrary to it. We must always be fearful and careful, as long as we live, for our weakness will stick close to us, unless (as I was saying before) grace is given to us, that we may know the value of every earthly good, and that in this life there can be no advantage, which is not attended with many dangers. It seemed to me, some few years ago, that not only was I not attached to my relations, but rather that I was weary of them; and it is very certain that there were times when I could not so much as endure their conversation. But afterwards there arose a business of great importance, which obliged me to remain with a sister of mine, whom I had formerly loved with great affection. But when I came again to converse with her, we did not remain long together; for, though she was better than I was, yet, as her state was different from mine, since she was married, the conversation was not always what I could have wished, and therefore I endeavored to be alone as much as I could. I found, also, that her affairs gave me much more trouble and care than those of my neighbors; and so I came to understand that I was not so free as I thought I was; but that it was still necessary for me to avoid occasions of sin, in order that this virtue which our Lord had begun to give me might increase; and I have endeavored, through His favor, to proceed in this manner ever since.

When our Lord begins to give virtue to a soul, it ought to be held in great esteem, and on no account should we expose it to the danger of being lost: this holds good in things regarding our reputation and honor, and in many other cases. Be your Reverence assured, that we who think

ourselves to be entirely disengaged from all things, are not so in reality; and hence we have great need to be careful in this respect, for whoever feels in himself any care for the point of honor, let him believe me, if he wish to gain profit to his soul, that there is at the end of it a chain which no file can divide, but God's grace, united with prayer and our own endeavors; and this chain seems to me so strong, that I am not surprised at the evil it produces. I know some persons whose actions are so holy and so great, that we cannot help admiring them, and exclaiming, "O my God! how comes it that such a soul is still upon the earth? Is she not already at the top of perfection? What is this? What can keep such a soul on earth, which does such great things for God?" I answer, some point of honor detains her; and what is still worse, she is unwilling to believe there is any such thing: and this happens because the devil makes her think that she is obliged to take care of it. But let people listen to me; for the love of our Lord, I beg of them to believe me, a poor little miserable ant, whom our Lord wishes to speak: be assured, that unless they free themselves from this caterpillar, though it may not destroy the tree entirely, because some other virtues perhaps remain, though worm-eaten, yet it will never be a beautiful tree, nor will it ever flourish in itself; no, nor even allow any others to flourish that grow near it, because the fruit of good example which it gives is not wholesome, nor does it last long. I say again and again, when any point of honor is to be maintained, however inconsiderable it may be, it is like the stop of an organ; when the tone is not correct, the whole of the sound is grating: this is a matter which does harm in every way; but in this way of prayer it is a very pestilence.

For then we endeavor to join ourselves to God by the way of union, and we desire to follow the counsels of Christ, loaded with injuries and false testimonies, and yet, at the same time, we wish to be very careful of our honor and reputation. But it is not possible ever to arrive at our journey's end, without walking along the same road our Lord went. Our Saviour then comes to a soul, when we endeavor to correspond with His grace, and to give up, in many things, even that which is our right. But some perhaps will say,

“I have no opportunity of this kind, to give up something for His sake.” I believe, that whosoever has such a resolution as this, our Lord will not suffer him to lose so great a good. His Majesty will ordain things in so many ways in order to gain this virtue, that he will wish he had not so many opportunities. Let us all then put our hands to the work; for I wish to inform you, that those miserable nothings, or at least some of them which I performed,—those straws of which I have spoken, and which I cast into the fire, and which were fit for nothing else,—are all accepted by our Lord: may He be praised for ever. Amongst my other imperfections I was subject to this: I had very little knowledge of the Breviary, and of all that was to be performed in the choir; and this happened by my being so careless and so given to vanities, while, at the same time, I saw other “Novices” who were able to teach me.

I did not ask them any questions, for fear they should discover my ignorance: but shortly after a good example was presented to me, and this favor is usually granted by God; for when He had opened my eyes a little, I then asked (when I was in the least doubt, though I may have known the thing very well) the little children to inform me; and so far from lessening myself in their esteem, our Lord was rather pleased, in my opinion, to give me a better memory. I was also a bad singer, and I was troubled if I had not learnt what I was commanded, not through fear of making any blunders in the presence of God (for that would have been a virtue), but because so many heard me; and thus I was so disturbed, purely about my reputation, that I really acquitted myself much worse than I need have done. Afterwards I thought it better to tell the sisters plainly, that I could not sing well, which was really the case. At first I had some difficulty even in this, but afterwards I took pleasure in doing it, and thus it is quite true, that when a soul begins not to care about her faults being known, she performs her duty much better. And when I renounced this unhappy desire of honor, which I fancied I could acquire in singing, and which every one places where he likes, I began to sing much better than before; and thus by performing such poor little acts as these, His Majesty is pleased to give

them worth and value, because they are done for His sake, though in reality, they are nothings, and I am sure I am nothing. He also helps us to perform greater things; and so it happened to me in matters concerning humility, by seeing that all the sisters advanced, except myself, for I was never good for anything; when, however, they left the choir, I would stay to fold up their mantles; for it seemed to me as if they were angels who were there singing the praises of our Lord; this I continued to do till they came to hear of it, and then I was not a little ashamed, for my virtue was not so far advanced as to desire they might know this circumstance, not because I was humble, but only lest they might laugh at me, because I was so completely good for nothing.

O my Lord! what confusion ought I not to have in beholding so much wickedness, and in counting such little miserable grains of sand, which I did not even raise from the earth for Thy honor, but all was wrapt in a thousand imperfections; for the water of Thy grace had not yet flowed from beneath those sands, to make them rise up. O my Creator! would that I had something valuable to mention among so many sins, since I have been commanded to relate those great favors which I have received from Thee! O my Lord! it is true that I know not how my heart can endure the thought, nor how any person who reads this account can help abhorring me, when he sees such immense favors so ill repaid, and that I am not ashamed to mention these services, as if they were mine. But my not having anything else to mention which I could call my own, makes me declare these base beginnings of mine, in order that whoever may have made greater and better beginnings may have good hopes, since He who has accepted my poor beginnings as a kind of payment, will certainly accept those others which are so much better than mine. May His Majesty give me grace, not always to continue in these things, which are only beginnings. Amen.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SAINT MENTIONS HOW OUR LORD WAS PLEASED TO SHOW HER, IN SPIRIT, THE PLACE WHICH HAD BEEN PREPARED FOR HER IN HELL, AND WHICH SHE HAD DESERVED BY HER SINS.

AFTER our Lord had bestowed many favors upon me, which I have already related, as well as many others, which were very great, He was pleased that one day, while I was at prayer, I should find myself (without knowing how) in a moment lodged in hell. I understood that our Lord was pleased to let me see the place which the devils had prepared for me there, and which I had deserved by my sins. This lasted only for a very short time; but yet, if I should live many years, it seems impossible to forget such a place. The entrance seemed to be like a long close alley, or rather like a low, dark, and narrow oven; and the ground appeared to be like mire, exceedingly filthy, stinking insupportably, and full of a multitude of loathsome vermin. At the end of it there was a certain hollow place, as if it had been a kind of a little press in the wall, into which I found myself thrust, and close pent up. All that I have said might pass for *delightful*, in comparison with what I felt in this press: the torment was so dreadful that no words can express the least part of it.

I felt a fire in my soul, which I cannot express or describe, as it was in reality. All those other most grievous torments, almost insupportable, which I have endured, by the shrinking up of all my sinews, and by other ways (which, in the judgment of physicians, were the greatest that could be suffered, in a corporeal way, in this world); and some also, as I have said, which were caused by the devil, were all a mere nothing, in comparison with what I suffered there, joined with the dismal thought, that all this suffering was to be without end or intermission. And even this is still nothing, if compared with the continual agony the soul suffers; that pressing, that stifling, that anguish so exceedingly sensible, together with such desperate torturing discontent and disgust, that I cannot express it. To say it is a butchering, or

rending of the soul, is to say little ; for this would seem to express a violence, used by some other agent to destroy her. But here she is her own executioner, and even tears herself in pieces. I saw not who it was that tormented me ; but I seemed to find myself both burnt and cut in pieces all at once ; and in so dreadful a place there was no room for the least hope of once meeting with any comfort or ease ; neither was there any such thing as sitting or lying down. Thus was I thrust into this place like a hole in the wall ; and these walls, which are also most horrible to the sight, press in upon their prisoner, so that everything chokes and stifles there. There is nothing but thick darkness, without the least glimpse of light ; and yet, I know not how it is, though there is no light, yet one sees all that can afflict the sight.

Our Lord was not pleased I should see any more of hell at that time. But afterwards I had another vision of most terrible things, as punishments inflicted for certain particular vices ; and these, as far as I could judge of them by the sight, seemed to be more hideous than the former. But as I did not feel the pain, they did not give me so much fear. But in this other vision, our Lord was pleased that I should really feel those torments, and that affliction of spirit, as if my very body had been suffering them. I knew not how all this could be ; but I understood very clearly that it was a great favor, and that our Lord was pleased I should see, by the light of my own eyes, from what place His great mercy had delivered me. It is nothing to have heard people talk of hell, nor to have meditated on several kinds of torments ; all is nothing to this, since it is quite a different thing ; and, indeed, the torments of this world are no more than a mere picture ; and the burning here in this life is but a trifle in comparison with the fire of hell. I was so astonished and amazed at this sight (and so I am even now while I am writing, though it happened six years ago), that at the thought of it my blood seems to chill in my veins through fear. And whatever troubles or pains I now suffer, if I do but call to my remembrance what I then endured, immediately all that can be suffered in this life seems to be nothing at all. I therefore say again, that this was one of the greatest favors which our Lord has ever shown me ; for it has been

of very great benefit to me, both in making me lose all fear about the tribulations and contradictions of this life, and giving me strength to bear them; and also in teaching me to give thanks to our Lord, for delivering me (as I may now hope) from those dreadful and never-ending torments.

Since that time all seems easy to me, in comparison of one moment of such suffering as I endured there. I wondered, that having so often read books which give an account of some of the torments of hell, I yet feared them so little, and did not regard them as I ought to have done. Considering in what state I then was, I was also astonished to see how it was possible for me to take pleasure in anything, that was likely to bring me at last to so bad a place. Be Thou eternally blessed, O my God! For how well hast Thou made it appear, that Thou didst love me incomparably better than I did myself! How often, O Lord! hast Thou delivered me from that dark and horrible dungeon! And how often have I returned to cast myself in there again, even against Thy will! Hence I feel very great pain for the many souls which are condemned to this prison, especially for the Lutherans, because they had once been members of the Church by their baptism.* This was followed by strong impulses to do good to souls; so that it seems to me very certain, that for the delivery of any one of them from such excessive torments, I could very willingly suffer many deaths. I consider that if we see a person in this world, whom we love dearly, in any great pain or affliction, it seems that our natural disposition invites us to compassion. And, therefore, to see a soul which is forever to endure that supreme affliction, and misery of all miseries, who shall be able to bear it? Surely, no heart can endure it without great grief. And since in this world we are moved to so much compassion for those whose misery, at the farthest, is to end with their lives, I know not how we can be at rest, considering what a vast number of souls the devil daily takes with him to hell.

This also makes me desire, that in a business of so great importance, we should not be satisfied with less than doing all we can on our part, and leaving nothing unattempted;

* These words are remarkable, as the saint alludes to the followers of Luther.

and I beseech our Lord to give us His grace for this purpose. When I consider, that although I was formerly very wicked, yet I was somewhat careful to serve God; nor did I then commit certain sins which are swallowed down by the world as if they were nothing; and though I had endured most dreadful sickness, with much patience that our Lord gave me, and I was also not inclined to murmur, or to detract, or to speak ill of anybody; nor was I covetous or envious, as far as I can remember, in any way, so as grievously to offend God, for though I was so wicked, I usually had the fear of God before me; yet, notwithstanding all this, I see where the devils had provided me a lodging: hence I conclude, that it is a dangerous thing we should take our pleasure here; and that a soul ought to take no rest, which is frequently falling into mortal sin. Let us, for the love of God, remove all occasions thereof, for our Lord will help us, as He has done me. May His Majesty vouchsafe to hold me fast in His hand, that so I may not relapse any more; for in that case I see to what place I must go: but I beseech our Lord not to suffer such a calamity to happen, for the sake of what His Majesty is. Amen.

Having now seen all these great things, and heard many secrets, which our Lord through His mercy was pleased to show me, concerning the glory which is prepared for the good, and the torments prepared for the wicked; and desiring, therefore, to find out some way and method whereby I might do penance for all the sins I had committed, and be enabled to do something towards obtaining so great a glory, I was desirous of flying from the world, and avoiding once for all the company of men. My heart could find no rest, but this restlessness was not troublesome to me, but sweet and delightful. It was evident it came from God, and that His Majesty had given heat enough to my soul—for digesting other stronger meats than she had before eaten. And now I began to consider what I could do for God: the first thing I thought of was to follow the “call” which He had given me to a religious life, and to observe my rule with the greatest possible perfection. And though there were in the house where I lived many servants of God, by whom He was greatly served, yet as they were in great want of temporal

means, many of the nuns were often obliged to go abroad to seek assistance ; still they did so with all due decorum and piety ; and besides, that house was not founded according to the first rigor of the rule, but that rule only was observed which was conformable with all the rest of the Order, according to the Bull of the Pope, granting a relaxation. There were also some other inconveniences : it seemed to me, also, that the place was too good, as the house was large and pleasant ; but the inconvenience of leaving the monastery had become very troublesome to me, though formerly I had frequently indulged in it, because some persons, whose wishes the Superiors could not refuse, were pleased that I should accompany them when they went out ; and the Superiors, being importuned by them, commanded me to do so : and thus by this means I grew accustomed to remain but seldom in the monastery. The devil, also, was sure to be instrumental in helping me not to remain at home ; for by my imparting to some of the religious there what I had learnt from those with whom I used to converse, they derived much advantage. Being once in the house with a certain person, she happened to say, both to me and to others, “What would you think if we were to become nuns, like those who are called Discalced, for it might be possible to form a monastery of that kind ?” As I had the same desires, I began to talk over the matter with this widow, who was my companion, and of whom I have spoken before, for she had the same desires as myself. She then began to consider how she could endow the monastery with rent ; but I soon saw there was no great probability of that, though the desire she had of doing so made us believe it might be possible. But I, on the other hand (as I found the greatest pleasure in the house where I was, because it was in accordance with my own satisfaction, and the cell in which I dwelt was very convenient), delayed all I could the execution of my design, though we did resolve to recommend it earnestly to Almighty God.

One day after I had communicated, His Majesty earnestly commanded me “to endeavor to accomplish this object with all my strength,” promising me, at the same time, “that the monastery should certainly be established, and that He would be greatly served in it ; that it should be called by the name

of St. Joseph ; that He himself would guard us at one gate, and His Mother our Lady at another ; that He would continue with us, and that the place would become like a star, which of itself would shine with great splendor . and that though other convents were then relaxed, yet men must not think He was but little served therein ; and what would become of the world, were it not for religious orders ?” I was told to inform my confessor of all that had been said to me, and that our Lord wished him not to oppose my design, nor put any obstacle in the way. This vision was followed by such great effects, that the “ words” used therein were uttered in such a manner, that I could not possibly doubt of their having come from God. Still I experienced the greatest affliction, because all the labors and trials this project would cost were represented to me. I considered how extremely happy I was in my first house ; and though formerly I began to think about this matter, it was not with any determination and certainty that it would succeed. It seemed, however, that the reward I should have for accomplishing it was placed before me ; yet when I foresaw what great trouble the undertaking would give me, I began to doubt about what I should do. But our Lord again spoke to me so many times on the subject, and represented to me so many reasons for undertaking it, that I saw clearly it was His will I should do so ; and I thought of nothing else but of acquainting my confessor with the matter, and I gave him in writing what had taken place. He did not dare expressly to command me to abandon the project ; but he saw little hopes of accomplishing it, judging humanly, because my companion, who was the person to commence the work, had but little means. He told me to speak on the subject with my Superior, and that I should do exactly as he told me. But I did not mention these visions to that Superior. The lady, however, spoke to him on the matter, and told him she wished to erect a new monastery. The Provincial very readily gave his consent, for he was a friend to all religious orders ; and so he gave all the liberty and power that were necessary, and told her that he would admit and accept the house. They then settled the revenue which the house was to have ; and we never wished the community to consist of more than thirteen reli-

gious; and this for many reasons. But before we finally settled the matter, we wrote to that holy man, Friar Peter of Alcantara, and told him all that had passed: he advised us to proceed with our design, and not abandon it, and gave us his opinion upon the whole affair.

But as soon as our intention began to be known in the town,* there instantly arose such a violent storm of persecution as cannot be described in words. The scoffs, the jeers, the laughter, the exclamations that it was a ridiculous, silly undertaking, were more than I can describe. They said it was better for me to remain where I was; but they persecuted my companion to such a degree that they quite afflicted her. As for myself, I knew not what to do; for it seemed as if they had some reason for what they did. In this distress I recommended myself to God, and then His Majesty began to comfort and encourage me, and told me, "that now I might see through what difficulties those saints had passed, who were the founders of religious Orders in the Church; and that I was to suffer many more persecutions than I could imagine, but that I must not be troubled at them." He told me also some things which I was to tell my companion; and that which astonished me most was, that we were instantly consoled respecting what had passed, and encouraged to bear up against all trials that were to come. I am quite certain that there was hardly any person of prayer who did not oppose us; and indeed all in the town were entirely against us, and all thought the undertaking was a most foolish thing.

The trouble and disturbance which the affair excited in the monastery were so great, that even the Provincial, thinking it would be rash to act in opposition to every one, changed his former opinion, and was now unwilling to admit the foundation of the house. He said, "the revenue was too small, and also not very certain, and that the opposition was too great." He seemed to have reason on his side: in a word, he gave up the affair altogether, and would not admit the house. We, who had already received the first blows on our head, were greatly troubled at this change in the Provincial; and especially was I afflicted to see the Pro-

* Avila.

vincial opposed to us, for had *he* approved of the undertaking, then every one would have freed me from blame. But to my companion people were not so favorable; they left her to herself; for they said she was bound to take away the scandal.

She went, therefore, to a very learned man, who was a great servant of God, and belonged to the Order of St. Dominick, and told him all that had passed, and gave him an account of the whole business. This happened before the Provincial had given it up, for now no one in the whole town would give us his opinion on the matter, and therefore they might justly assert, as indeed they did, that the project originated only in our own head. But this lady gave the holy man an account of the whole affair, and mentioned that the revenue she intended to settle on the monastery came out of her own estate, and she wished he would assist us, because he was the most learned man in the town at that time, and there were few so learned in the whole Order. I told him likewise, all that we intended to do, and gave him some reasons for the undertaking: but I did not mention any of my revelations; I only dwelt on those natural motives which struck me, because I wished him not to give any opinion but what was conformable to them. He answered, that he wished to have eight days to consider the matter; he also asked us, whether we were determined to do whatever he should tell us; and I assured him we were. But, though I said so much, and methinks I would have done as I promised, yet, never did I lose the confidence that the monastery would be established. The faith and confidence of my companion were still greater than my own, for, whatever people might say to her, she was resolved never to give up the project. But, though I considered it was quite certain the work would be done, so deeply was I convinced the above revelation was true (provided that it contained nothing against Holy Scripture, or the decrees of the Church, which we are bound to observe); yet, though I considered the revelation was really from God, still, if this learned man had told me that we could not effect our design without offending our Lord and going against a good conscience, I think I should instantly have abandoned it, and

sought for some other means; but our Lord gave me no other but this. This servant of God told me, some time afterwards, that he had carefully considered the matter, and had come to the resolution of doing all in his power to induce us to abandon the undertaking, because the opposition of the people had already come to his ears, and also because every one considered it to be a foolish thing. And a certain gentleman, as soon as he heard that we intended to speak with the Father, sent word to him, and advised him to consider well what he did, for he would not help us. But now, when he began to consider what answer he should return, and to reflect seriously on the matter, and upon the intention we had, and what regularity and devotion we intended to introduce into the monastery, he came to the conclusion that its establishment would tend much to the honor of God, and that we should on no account abandon our object; and hence he advised us to make all possible haste to bring the matter to a conclusion, and he gave us his own opinion as to the best method we should adopt; and he told us, that though the revenue was small, God was to be trusted, and that whoever opposed the design should be sent to him, for he knew well what answer to give; and thus he always assisted us, as I shall afterwards declare.

With these words we went away much comforted; and we found that some holy persons who had before been opposed to us, were now much more satisfied and quiet, and amongst them was that devout cavalier, of whom I have made mention above, who, knowing that our Order aimed at great perfection, as indeed it does, because it is wholly founded on prayer, he gave us his opinion, that however difficult the means seemed to be, having no appearance of success, yet, it may happen to be an undertaking inspired by God. Now our Lord may have disposed him to be of this mind, and the priest also,—that servant of God, who was the first (as I mentioned) to give his opinion, and who is a pattern for all the town, and one whom God preserves there for the advancement of many souls: this person now came forward to assist me in the business. We had thus so far succeeded, by the help of many prayers, for we bought a house, though a small one, in a good part of the town;

but its smallness did not trouble me at all, for our Lord had told me before that I should take possession as well as I could, and that afterwards I should see what His Majesty would do; and this promise I have seen strictly performed. And thus, though I found we had but little means, yet I believed our Lord would so arrange matters that we should be assisted in other ways.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE SAINT CONTINUES THE HISTORY OF THE FOUNDATION OF ST. JOSEPH'S MONASTERY, ETC.

WHEN the business was now so far advanced, and so near being completed that the deeds were to be drawn up the very next day, it happened that just then our Father Provincial changed his opinion; and I believe he was moved thereto by Divine Providence, as we shall see afterwards, because, as our prayers were so numerous, it seems our Lord was perfecting the work, and arranging things in such a way that it might be accomplished in a different manner. But as the Provincial was unwilling to admit the house, my confessor immediately commanded me to think no more about the matter: but our Lord knows what great troubles and afflictions I had to endure, before I could bring the business to its present state. But, as it was now abandoned, all the former objections were confirmed, viz., "That the project was the foolishness of women," &c.; and I had to bear all their complaints and murmurs, though up to this time the Provincial had commanded the business to be done.

In the mean time, I was in very bad odor in the house where I was, because I wished to have more enclosure in the monastery. They said, "That I affronted them (by my new project); that God could be as well served there as in another place; that there were persons much better than myself; that I had no love for the house; that I should have done much better to have procured revenues for that house than for any other place." And some even said, that I ought to be thrown into prison; and few there were who took

my part in any way ; but I saw clearly that they had reasons for many things they said ; and sometimes I made excuses, though as I could not tell them the principal motive (which was the *command* of our Lord), I knew not what to say, and so I held my tongue. At other times our Lord showed me very great favors, and all this affair of the monastery gave me no trouble whatever ; for I gave it up with as much pleasure and facility as if it had never cost me any pain. But this no one could believe, not even those persons of prayer with whom I used to converse, for they thought I was still full of trouble and shame ; even my confessor himself could hardly believe the contrary. But, as I thought I had done all that lay in my power, it seemed to me I was no longer obliged to promote what our Lord had commanded me. I remained still in the house, quite content and at my ease, though I could never help believing that the business would be done. Still I neither knew how nor when, but I believed that it would certainly be accomplished.

That which extremely afflicted me was, that once my confessor wrote me a letter to this effect, as if I had done something against his will, though it seems our Lord was pleased I should have some affliction, even by means of that which was most dear to me ; and thus, in the multitude of my persecutions, when I was expecting to receive some comfort, my confessor, as I have said, wrote to me, saying : " That now he hoped I saw, by what had happened, that all had been a dream ; that I should, for the future, so far correct myself, as not to meddle any more with any business, nor talk any more of this business in particular, for I must have observed what scandal had arisen," &c. Other things he said which gave me great pain. But this letter, I confess, gave me greater pain than all my other troubles put together, because I then began to think whether I might not have been the cause of all the evil, and whether I did not commit an error whereby God may have been offended. nay, I even began to fear whether those visions might not have been illusions, and my whole course of prayer have been from the devil, and whether, in a word, I were not then in a state of error and perdition. These thoughts so overpowered me, that I fell into the most profound grief and trouble. But our

Lord, who was never wanting to me in all my afflictions, often comforted and strengthened me, though this is not the place to relate what He did. But He told me, "I should not trouble myself; that I had served Him well, and had not offended Him in this business." In the mean time, He told me, that I should do what my confessor commanded me, by keeping silence till a fit time should come to renew the subject. After this I became so content and consoled, that the afflictions which came upon me seemed to be a mere nothing. Hereby our Lord showed me, what a very great benefit it is to endure troubles and persecutions for His sake, because so much had the love of God increased in my soul, as well as other virtues, that I was amazed at it: and this is the reason why I cannot help *desiring* afflictions. In the mean time, other persons thought I was quite dejected with what had happened, and this, indeed, would have been the case, had not our Lord been pleased to honor me so much with such great favors. Then greater impetuosities of divine love, and greater raptures than those I mentioned before, began to happen, though I did not mention them to any one, nor the profit I derived from them.

In the mean time, that holy Dominican* continued to believe for certain the business would succeed, and I believed the same also: but I made no account of this, because I was resolved to obey my confessor. The Dominican and my companion arranged matters together, and wrote to Rome about the affair, and made their offers. Here the devil began to make it known, one person talking about these things to another, that I had had some revelation on the matter. Upon this, some came to me, in a great deal of fear, to tell me "I had better look well to myself; that the days were evil, and that, perhaps, men might lay things to my charge, and complain even to the Inquisitors." These fears made me laugh, because in this matter I never had any fears, because I knew well, that in all things relating to the Catholic faith, even to the least ceremony of the Church, or for the truth of any doctrine in the Holy Scripture, I was ready to

* His name was Pedro Ibañez. (See vol. vii. of the Bollandists, p. 183, &c.)

die a thousand deaths. I therefore desired those persons not to fear for me, and that my soul would indeed be in a miserable condition, if anything could be found in her to make her afraid of the Inquisition; and that, if I thought there were any grounds to fear, I myself would be the first to go before the Inquisitors; and that if any charge were brought against me, our Lord would deliver me from it, and I should be the gainer thereby.

I spoke on this matter with the Dominican Father, who, as I have said, was so learned a man, that I could confidently rely upon whatever he said. And on this occasion I told him, with all the clearness I could, of all the visions I had received, and of the kind of prayer I used, and of the great favors which our Lord had been pleased to show me, and I begged of him to consider well all these things, and to let me know if they were in any way against Holy Scripture, and that he would give me his opinion thereon. This he did, and so he made me very secure in my mind; and I also thought he himself derived some advantage from this matter; for though he was before very holy, yet, from that time he gave himself more to prayer, and entered into a monastery of his own Order, which was a place of great solitude and silence, in order that he might exercise himself better in prayer. There he remained about two years, and then he was removed by obedience, much to his sorrow. But his Superiors stood in need of such a man, and I was much grieved myself when he left me, because I wanted such a person, though I knew he would be the gainer. While I was in trouble about his departure, Our Lord told me "to be comforted," for he went for some good purpose. And, indeed, he returned afterwards, with his soul so much improved in spiritual matters, that he himself told me, at his return, he would not for anything in the world have neglected making the journey. I also might say the same thing, because, as he formerly comforted and consoled me only by his letters, he was now able to do the same, by the great experience he had acquired in supernatural things. Our Lord was also pleased to bring him back at the time when His Majesty saw we stood in need of him, to assist His work concerning this monastery, which it was His will should be established.

In the meantime, I remained silent on this matter for five or six months, neither hearing or saying anything; nor did our Lord command me to do anything, and I did not know the reason thereof; but still I could not help thinking that the business would be accomplished sooner or later. About the end of this period, the rector of the college, who belonged to the Society of Jesus, being removed from this place, His Majesty brought another* to succeed him, who was a very spiritual man, and of great courage, understanding, and learning: he came at the time when I was in much need of help, because, as my confessor had a Superior over him, this virtue was practiced to perfection, viz., not to remove from any place but only in conformity to the will of their Superior; and, though he clearly understood the state of my soul, and desired I might advance more and more, yet he dared not, in some things, come to any fixed determination, for many reasons which he had; while, on the other hand, my soul had such great impetuosities, that I found it very troublesome to be tied down so much: still I resolved not to swerve from his commands.

Being one day in great affliction, because I thought my confessor did not believe me, our Lord told me "not to be troubled thereat," assuring me that all my troubles would soon be at an end. At these words I rejoiced, thinking I should soon die, and I felt great pleasure when I remembered this. But I clearly perceived afterwards, that these words related to the coming of this new rector, of whom I have spoken, because never afterwards did I experience any pain on account of this rector, for he was not opposed to the sub-rector, who was my confessor; but rather he told him to console me, and assure me, "there was no reason for me to fear; and that he would not conduct my soul by such strait and narrow ways, and with such restrictions, but would allow the Spirit of God to work freely in me."

Sometimes it seemed, by reason of these great impetuosities, that my soul had scarcely room to breathe. I went to visit this rector, and my confessor commanded me to speak to him with all candor and clearness: I felt, however, the

* His name was Gaspar de Salazar.

greatest difficulty in doing so. But it is quite true, that on my entrance into the Confessional, I felt in my soul I know not what, and neither before nor after do I remember ever to have experienced the like: I cannot tell how it was, nor can I explain it by any kind of comparison, because it was a spiritual joy and an understanding which my soul had, that the soul of this man would be able to understand me, and that his judgment and mine would agree, although (as I have said) I knew not *how* this would be. If I had spoken with him before, or if others had told me something great about him, it would not have been very surprising if I rejoiced when I heard that he was to hear me. But neither of us had ever spoken to each other, nor had any one ever given me any account of him: but since that time I have clearly seen, that my soul did not deceive me, because, by speaking with him, I have derived great advantage in every way, because his method of conversation is very important for those persons whom our Lord seems to advance (in the road of perfection), for He makes them *run*, and not walk step by step. His method is entirely to disengage them from all creatures, and to exercise them by mortifications; and in this respect our Lord has given him very great talents, as well as in many other things. As soon as I began to speak with him on my affairs, I immediately understood his method, and saw I had found a holy and pure soul, and that our Lord had given him a particular talent in trying spirits. He consoled me exceedingly. Soon after I had spoken to him, our Lord began to press me to resume the business of the monastery, and that I should declare both to my confessor and to this rector, the many reasons why they were not to oppose my design: some of these reasons made them quite afraid to oppose me, because this Father rector never doubted but that all was directed by the Spirit of God, since he beheld and considered with great care and attention all the effects.

At last, after much consideration, they durst not presume to oppose me; and my confessor again gave me leave to use all my endeavors: and yet I clearly foresaw what trouble the undertaking would give me, because I was quite alone, and had very little power to do anything. But we agreed the matter should be carried on with great secrecy, and

therefore I prevailed on a sister of mine, who lived elsewhere, to buy the house with money, which our Lord found means, by certain ways, to give me in order to purchase it. But it would be too long to mention how our Lord continued to provide for us, for I made it a point not to do anything against obedience. I knew, however, that if I told anything to my Superiors, the whole business would be undone, as it happened before, and if I should mention the subject now, things would be even much worse. In procuring money to make the bargain and fit up the house, I endured many troubles, and some of them all alone, though my companion did what she could. But this was little, so very little, that it was next to nothing; all she did was to lend her name to the undertaking, and to patronize it; all the rest of the trouble was mine, and it came upon me in so many ways, that I now wonder how I was able to endure it. Sometimes, when I was thus in affliction, I said: "O my Lord! why do you command things which appear impossible? Though I am a woman, yet, if I had liberty, something might perhaps be done; but being bound in all directions, without money and without knowing where to get any, to pay either for the brief, or for anything else, what can I do, O Lord?"

Being one day in great want, and not knowing what to do, and not being able to pay the workmen, St. Joseph, my true father and patron, appeared to me, and told me, "That I should not fail to make the agreement, and that I should not want for money." Accordingly, I made the bargain without having any money, but afterwards our Lord provided some by such wonderful ways, that they who heard them were amazed.

But now the house seemed to be too small; and, indeed, it was so to such a degree, that it appeared impossible ever to make it a monastery, and I had a good mind to buy another house; but I had no money, nor means to procure any: there was another very small house near it, whereof a church* might be made. But one day, after I had communicated, our Lord spoke thus to me: "I have already told you to enter how you can." And in the manner of exclamation,

* That is, a small chapel for the nuns.

He also said to me: "Oh! the covetousness of mankind! why are you afraid of wanting a little earth? How often did I sleep in the open air, not knowing where to lay my head!" These words terrified me, for I saw our Lord had reason for what He said; and so I went to the little house, and bargained for it. But I found, that though it was so very small, it was fit for such a monastery, and I thought no more about purchasing a larger place: but I endeavored to prepare this house in such a way as to make it habitable, though everything was rough and coarse. All I aimed at was, that it might not be injurious to our health, and so it shall ever remain.

Upon the Feast of St. Clare, when I was about to communicate, she appeared to me in great beauty, and told me "to be of good courage, and to go on with the work I had commenced, and that she would assist me." Her words proved true, for a monastery of religious, belonging to her Order, which is near this house, helps to support us; and what is still more, she has by little and little brought my desire to such perfection, that the very same poverty which that blessed saint established in her house is also practiced in this belonging to us, and we live on alms. This, however, cost me a great deal of trouble, in getting the point so confirmed by the authority of the Pope, that no innovation might be made afterwards, nor the house ever have any revenue. And now our Lord does even more than what I have mentioned—(and perhaps this favor may have happened through the intercession of this blessed saint), for His Majesty provides us with all things necessary, in the most abundant manner, without our asking any one. May He be blessed for all things. Amen.

Being one day, about this time,* in a certain monastery belonging to the Order of the glorious St. Dominic, I was considering the many sins of my former life (which I had confessed in that house), and the events of my wicked way of living, when suddenly there came so great a rapture upon me, that it took me almost out of myself. I sat down; and yet it seemed to me I was not able either to hear Mass, or

* This was about the year 1561.

even to see the Elevation, for which I afterwards had some scruple. While I was in this state, I appeared to be clothed with a garment of great whiteness and brightness, and at first I could not tell who clothed me; but afterwards I saw our Lady on the right hand, and my father, St. Joseph, on the left, who clothed me with this robe. I was then given to understand that I was now cleansed from my sins. When I was thus clothed, and full of the greatest joy and glory, our Lady immediately took hold of me by the hands, and told me, "that seeing me devoted to the glorious St. Joseph gave her much pleasure; that our Lord, and she herself, and St. Joseph, would be devoutly served in the monastery; that I should have no fear about this decree being changed, though the obedience placed upon me might not be agreeable to my inclinations, because they themselves would protect us; that her Son had already promised He would remain with us." As a proof that all her words would come true, she cast a very beautiful chain of gold around my neck; with a cross of great value attached to it. But this gold and these precious stones are so very different from those of this world, that no comparison whatever can be made between them, nor can we possibly imagine what their beauty was. Neither can our understanding know of what the garment was made, nor can it form any idea of its whiteness; for all the whiteness we see in this world is like *soot* in comparison. The beauty I saw in our Blessed Lady was beyond description, though I could not determine the form nor figure of any particular part. I could only discern the form of her countenance: she was clad in white, and surrounded with excessive splendor, yet this was sweet and not dazzling. I did not see the glorious St. Joseph so clearly, though I knew well he was present, as in those visions which are not seen, whereof I have already spoken. Our Lady seemed very young, and she remained with me only for a short time, but I enjoyed great pleasure and glory from the sight, *more* in my opinion than ever I had enjoyed before; and glad would I have been never to have been deprived of the vision. I thought I saw both of them ascend into heaven, attended with a great multitude of angels; in the meantime I was left quite alone, though so comforted, and transported, and recol-

lected in prayer, that I remained for some time unable either to move or speak, for I was almost out of myself. I had great impulses to be, as it were, annihilated for God, and I experienced some of the effects thereof; and the whole happened in such a way that I was never able (though I used great endeavors) to doubt but that the vision came from God.

The Queen of Angels left me very full of comfort and peace, by what she said to me concerning obedience; and the case was this: for my part, I was unwilling to give up this house to the Order; and, indeed, our Lord Himself told me that it was not proper I should give it to them: He also gave me the reasons why it was not proper at all, and told me to write to Rome by a certain way, and He assured me He would arrange the matter so that it should be successful. And so it happened; for the business was despatched by the very means whereof our Lord had spoken to me, for we never should have been able to manage it ourselves. But on account of what happened afterwards, I saw it was proper that obedience should be shown to the Bishop, by submitting the matter to him. Then, however, I did not know him, nor was I aware what kind of prelate he was: but our Lord was pleased he should be so good, and should favor this house as much as was necessary, in order to oppose what happened therein, as I shall relate afterwards, and to place it in its present condition. May He be blessed for ever who has done all things! Amen.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SHE MENTIONS HOW SHE WAS OBLIGED TO LEAVE AVILA, AND THE REASON THEREOF, BEING COMMANDED TO GO BY HER SUPERIOR TO COMFORT A LADY THERE, WHO WAS MUCH AFFLICTED.

NOTWITHSTANDING all the care I took that people might not know what we were doing, the whole of this business could not be carried on with such secrecy, without certain persons knowing something about it: some believed it, and others did not. I was greatly afraid, that if the Provincial

should come, and they happen to tell him about it, he might command me to abandon the affair altogether, and then all the undertaking would be at an end. But our Lord ordained matters in such a way that in a large city,* more than twenty leagues distant, there was a certain lady† in deep affliction for the death of her husband. She was reduced to such extremity of sorrow that her health was endangered: she had heard something of such a miserable sinner as myself; for it seems our Lord had so ordained, that persons spoke well of me to her, in order that other good effects might be produced, which I shall mention, and which followed from this journey. This lady was well acquainted with the Provincial, who, considering what a respectable lady she was, and that I was in a monastery which did not keep enclosure, our Lord gave her so great a desire to see me (thinking she would be comforted by my means), that she could not possibly stop any longer, without using all her endeavors to get me there: and so she wrote to the Provincial, who was then at a great distance. He sent me a command under obedience, that I should immediately visit the lady, and take a companion with me. On the night of the Nativity I received the command; and it put me to some confusion, and gave me much trouble to see they were resolved to take me away, as if they saw some good in me. But knowing myself how wicked I was, I could not endure the thought of the journey; and so, recommending myself earnestly to God, I remained during all the time of Matins, or at least, during the greater part of them, in a great rapture. Our Lord then told me, "that I must not fail to undertake the journey, and that I was not to listen to the opinions of others, for few would think they could advise me to go without rashness; but that, however painful the journey might be to me, yet He would be greatly served thereby; and that it would also be proper to absent myself from the monastery till the brief should arrive, because the devil had devised a great plot when the Provincial should come, but yet that I must be afraid of nothing, for He would assist me in the business." These words strengthened

* Toledo. The journey was undertaken in January, 1562.

† Her name was Louisa de la Cerda. (See Bollandists, vol. vii.)

and comforted me exceedingly, and I mentioned all to the rector, who told me "that I must go by all means." But others said I ought not to go, and that it was only a stratagem of the devil, in order that some evil might happen to me, and that my best plan would be to write to the Provincial. But I obeyed the rector; and considering also what had happened in prayer, I began my journey without fear, but yet not without extreme confusion to consider for what object they sent for me; and finding how much they were deceived, it made me importune our Lord the more not to forsake me. But I was comforted to know, that in the place I was going to, there was a college belonging to the Society of Jesus; and, by being obedient to all their commands, I thought I should enjoy some security. When I arrived there, our Lord was pleased to give the lady so much comfort, that an improvement in her health immediately began to be visible, for every day she became better and better. This was the more to be prized, because (as I said before) the pain she had, kept her in great trouble. But our Lord, no doubt, granted her ease on account of the many prayers which certain holy persons, whom I knew, made in her behalf, in order that everything might succeed well. She was herself full of the fear of God, and so good that her deep piety supplied for what was wanting in me. She conceived a great affection for me; and seeing her goodness, I conceived the same for her: but still, all was a cross to me, for the attention they paid me was a great torment to me; and making so much of me caused me to fear exceedingly. My soul was therefore so recollected, that I durst not be careless in any way, and our Lord also was not unmindful of me; for while I was there He showed me excessive favors, and these gave me such great liberty of soul, as to make me *despise* all the esteem I received there, and the more I received the more I despised it, so that I failed not to treat with those ladies, who were so great, with as much liberty as if I had been equal to them, though they were of such honorable birth that I might, without any dishonor to myself, have been their servant. I derived great advantage from all this; and so I told her. I saw that she was a woman subject to weakness and passions like myself, and what little

reason she had to esteem her greatness and power, which, in proportion as it is great, brings after it so much the more trouble and care. And they are so careful to live in a manner conformable to their rank, that the trouble hardly allows them to live, for they eat out of the proper time, and out of order, because everything must be done in accordance with their station, and not with a regard to their health and constitution; and sometimes even they must feed upon such meats, that are more agreeable to their greatness than to their taste: and thus I abhorred the idea of being a great lady.

May God deliver me from such a dangerous state, though she of whom I am speaking is one of the principal ladies in the kingdom, and I believe there are few more humble or more affable than she is; but still I have compassion for her, to see how she sometimes acts, not in conformity with her own inclination, but to comply with the rules of her state. In servants there is little trust to be placed; and though those which she had were good, yet she could not speak more confidently to one than to another; and if she does, then whoever is most favored by her is sure to be less beloved by the others. This high state is indeed a slavery, and one of the greatest lies which the world tells is, when it calls such persons as these "lords and ladies." To me they seem to be nothing more than slaves a thousand times over. Our Lord also was pleased, while I remained in this lady's house, that the domestics should greatly improve in serving His Majesty, though I was not free from some troubles: and some persons even envied me, on account of the great affection which this lady had for me. They might, perhaps, fancy that I had some personal interest in what I did; and so our Lord permitted them to give me some little trials, both in this and other ways, in order to prevent me from being intoxicated by the kindness and attention that were paid to me on the other side. But from all these troubles He was pleased to deliver me, to the great benefit of my soul.

While I was yet remaining there, a certain Religious, who was a very eminent person, and whom I had sometimes consulted many years before, happened to come to this place. While I was at Mass one day, in a monastery of his Order,

which was near the place where I resided, a desire came upon me to know in what disposition his soul then was, for I desired that he might become a great servant of God. I rose up that I might go and speak to him; but being already recollected in prayer, I thought afterwards it would be lost time; and besides, what had I to do with him? I then began to sit down again, and, as far as I remember now, I did this very same thing three several times. At last, my good angel became stronger than the evil one, and so I went and inquired for him. I began to ask him many questions, as he did me also, because many years had passed away since last we met, respecting the lives we led. I began to tell him, that as for mine, it had been subject to many afflictions. When he heard this, he pressed me to acquaint him with those afflictions; and I replied, that it was not fit to know them, nor very fit for me to relate them. But he made answer, that since the Dominican Father (of whom I spoke before) knew them, he would soon make him acquainted with them, as they were both great friends, and therefore that I should not feel any unwillingness or difficulty in relating them.

The truth is, he could not refrain from importuning me, nor was I able to prevent myself telling them to him. For with all that trouble and shame which I used to have whenever I spoke on these matters, yet when I discoursed about them with this man, and with the rector (of whom I have already spoken), I had no trouble at all, but it was rather a comfort to me. I therefore explained my whole life to him, but under the seal of confession; and he appeared to me more prudent than ever, though I always considered him to be a man of strong understanding, and I admired the great talents and qualifications he had, which would enable him to do much good, were he wholly and entirely to give himself up to God. This wish I have had for some years,—that I cannot see any one who pleases me, but I must instantly desire that he might give himself entirely to God; and I wish it so ardently, that sometimes I can hardly contain myself. And though I desire all the world might serve our Lord, yet I desire, with great impulses and impetuosity, that those who please me should do it most, and therefore I used

often to importune our Lord in their behalf. As regards the religious man of whom I was speaking, he requested me to recommend him earnestly to Almighty God; but there was not much necessity for him to tell me to do this, for I was already so taken with him, that I could not possibly do otherwise. And so I went, quite alone, to the place where I was accustomed to pray; and being then in deep recollection, I began to speak with our Lord; but it was in a manner so very familiar, that often I knew not what I was saying: for then it is love which speaks, and the soul is so disengaged from herself, that she does not consider what a difference there is between her and God. The love which I know His Majesty has for me makes my soul forget herself; for she thinks she is then in Him: and so, as if both He and she were one and the same without distinction, she speaks foolish things. After I had entreated our Lord, with abundance of tears, that the soul of this religious might devote herself in good earnest to His service, I remembered having thus spoken to our Lord: "that though I had him already in reality, yet that would not content me, for I must have him altogether;" and I also said, "O Lord! do not refuse me this favor: consider that this good man is fit to be numbered as our friend."

Oh! how great is the goodness and kindness of God! He does not consider so much our words as the desires and affections with which they are spoken. But how could He allow such a miserable creature as I am to speak to Him with so much boldness? May He be blessed for ever and ever! I remember that during those hours of prayer there came upon me that night a great affliction, for I was thinking whether I was in favor with God; but as I could not tell whether I was in His favor or no, I desired not so much to know this as to die, rather than continue in such a life, wherein I could not be sure whether I was dead or no; for I could not endure a more cruel death than to think I had offended God; and this pain afflicted me so much, that even caressed as I was and dissolved in tears, I entreated His Majesty not to permit it: and then I came to understand that I was in a state of grace, because such a love for God, and my having received those favors and feelings from His Majesty, were not compatible with a soul in the state of mortal sin. In the mean

time, I began to be confident that our Lord would grant what I had asked for that other person. He told me to say certain words to him. But this command troubled me much, because I knew not how to utter them; for to carry a message to a third person, in the way I have mentioned, is what always afflicts me, especially when I know not how it will be received, or whether the person will not laugh at me for my pains. This gave me much trouble; but I was at last so far persuaded, as to promise God that I would not neglect mentioning those words; and on account of the great confusion I was in, I wrote them and delivered them to him. This action seemed to have been inspired by God, by the great effect it produced; for he very seriously resolved to give himself to prayer, though still he did not do it immediately. But as our Lord wished to make him wholly His own, He was pleased to declare certain truths to him by my means, which though I did not then understand myself, yet they happened so opportunely for him that he was amazed thereat. Our Lord disposed him to believe that they came from His Majesty; and I, on the other hand, though so miserable a creature, earnestly besought our Lord that He would perfectly turn him to Himself, and make him detest all the pleasures and enjoyments of this life; and He has been pleased to grant me this favor, for which may He be praised forever; and He did the favor in so complete a manner, that whenever this holy man speaks to me, it makes me almost go out of myself; for had I not seen it with my own eyes, I should have doubted whether in so short a time so many favors could have been bestowed upon a creature; and these keep him so occupied on God, that already he seems not to live for anything in this life. May His Majesty take him by the hand, for if he should continue to advance in this way (as I trust in our Lord he will)—his soul being so deeply rooted in the knowledge of himself, he will become one of the most eminent of God's servants, and will do great good to many souls, on account of the deep experience he has acquired, in a short time, of spiritual things. These are gifts which God gives *when* and *how* He likes, without any respect either to time or services. I say not, but that these sometimes avail much: still I wish to say, that our Lord

sometimes gives not after twenty years of contemplation what He bestows upon another in one year. Our Lord knows the reason of this. There is also an error which deceives us, when it seems we understand that by the course of years, which can, however, in no way be obtained without experience. And so many err, as I have said, in thinking they are fit to judge of spiritual things, without having any spirituality themselves. I say not but that a learned man, even should he have no knowledge of spiritual things, may direct another man who *is* spiritual: but this is to be understood both interiorly and exteriorly, so far as it may be conformable with his natural powers, by the help of the understanding: and as for those things which are supernatural, a person must be careful to act in conformity with Holy Scripture. For the rest, let him not vex or harass himself, nor imagine he understands that of which in reality he knows nothing; nor should he choke and stifle spirits which, as regards these things, are governed by another and a higher Lord: they are not without a superior of their own.

Be not amazed at this, nor let these things seem impossible to you, for all things are possible with our Lord: but endeavor to strengthen your faith, and to humble yourself, when you see that our Lord knows how to make a poor ignorant woman more wise perhaps in this science than another person, however learned he may be. By means of this humility one will be able to do more good, both to the souls of others and to himself, than if he became a hermit without this virtue. I repeat again and again, that if he be not a man of experience, and have not abundance of humility whereby to know that he does not understand the matter (and such a case is not impossible) then he will gain but little himself, and he also whom he guides will gain still less. But if he have humility, then he need not fear our Lord will ever permit that either the one or the other will be deceived.

But now to return to this Father of whom I was speaking: though our Lord had given him experience in many things, yet he also endeavored to acquire all that may be obtained by study; and whenever his own experience fails him, he gains information by means of those who have more. And here our Lord comes in to his assistance, by giving him

greater faith; and thus he does great good, both to his own soul and to those of others also: and mine is among the number: for as our Lord knew the many afflictions I should have to endure, it seems His Majesty so provided, that as some of them would be brought upon me by those who directed me, there might be others likewise to help me in these trials, and to do me great good. Our Lord has so completely changed this Religious, that, so to speak, he is not like the man he was before. He has also given him great corporal strength to do penance, which before was impossible to him, for he was always unwell. But now he is full of courage to do everything that is good; and he has likewise a variety of other good qualities, which make it quite clear that his vocation came in a very especial manner from our Lord. May He be blessed forever! I believe that all the good he has received has come from the favors our Lord bestowed upon him in prayer; and these are not artificial things, for our Lord has been pleased to give him experience of them in many cases; and he has given proofs that he is one, who understands very well the value of that merit which is acquired by patiently bearing persecutions. I trust in the greatness of our Lord, that some persons of his "Order" will gain great benefit by his means, and even the whole of the Order itself. This already begins to be understood: I have seen wonderful visions, and our Lord has told me some particulars relating both to him and the rector of the college belonging to the Society of Jesus: and these particulars are deserving of great admiration. I heard other things of two more religious men, belonging to the Order of St. Dominic; but of one especially, of whose advancement in spiritual matters our Lord has already manifested some proofs to the world. I had also formerly heard of him; but many things are related of him of whom I was speaking before: one of these I will now relate.

I was once with him in the Locutory of the monastery, and so great was the love which my soul understood was burning in his, that I was almost absorbed by it; for I was considering the greatness of God, and how in so short a time he had raised a soul to such an admirable state. He puts me to great confusion, when I hear him listen with such deep

humility to what I sometimes say to him about prayer ; and I can say but little to such a person as he was. But our Lord was pleased to bear with me, through the earnest desire I had to see him a great proficient in prayer. And it did me so much good to be with him, that he seemed to inflame my soul with new fire, and with new desires to serve our Lord, just as if I had then to begin over again. O my Jesus ! what cannot a soul do, when she is all inflamed with Thy love ! We ought to esteem such a soul very much, and beseech our Lord to allow her to remain in this life · whoever has the same kind of love should follow such souls as far as possible.

It is a great comfort to a sick man to find another afflicted with the same disease, for it is a consolation for him to see that he is not alone : they help one another : both to suffer and to merit. They unite together like men, determined to risk a thousand lives for the cause of God, and they desire no other happiness than to meet with some opportunity of offering themselves in sacrifice for His service. They are like brave soldiers, who, in order to gain the spoils of their enemy, and so become rich, desire that there may still be wars, because they know well there is no other means whereby to better themselves. To labor is their occupation ; and oh ! what an admirable thing it is, when our Lord gives us light to know how much is gained by suffering for Him ! This truth is not well understood, till everything be given up, because whoever keeps anything for himself, proves that he esteems it worth something. And if he esteem it worth something, he cannot help being sorry at leaving it. But here all is quite lost, and the proverb comes in well which says, “that he is a lost man who goes after that which is lost.” And what greater perdition, blindness, and misfortune, than to esteem that highly which in itself is nothing ?”

To return now to what I was saying. Being excessively delighted at beholding that soul, in which I thought our Lord wished me clearly to see the treasures He had placed in her ; and considering the favor He had done me, in having made me the means of its being effected, though I knew I was unworthy of such a favor, I valued the more the favors our Lord had bestowed upon him, and considered I

was more a debtor for them than if they had been conferred on myself; and I praised our Lord exceedingly, because I saw that His Majesty still continued to accomplish my desires, and to hear my prayers, in which I begged of Him to excite the spirit of such persons. In the mean time, my soul, unable to bear such excessive joy, went out of herself, and lost herself, in order to gain more. She lost these present considerations, and the hearing of that divine tongue in which the Holy Spirit seemed to speak; and there came on me a great rapture, which made me in a manner lose my senses, though it lasted but a short time. I saw Christ in very great majesty and glory, showing that He was exceedingly well pleased with what passed there. And so He told me; and He wished me clearly to know that He is always present at such conferences, and is extremely delighted when men love to speak of Him.

At another time, being far from this place, I saw this Religious carried on high by angels with great glory. I understood by this vision, that his soul was making great progress. And so she was, for he was slandered with a horrible crime by a person whom he had formerly obliged, and whose soul and reputation he had greatly benefited. This affliction he endured with admirable patience, and he did many other things which promoted God's honor, besides suffering other persecutions.

I need not, I think, relate any more here, as your Reverence knows them already; but, if you think otherwise, they may afterwards be related for our Lord's greater glory. All the predictions respecting this monastery which I have already mentioned, and others which I shall afterwards relate about it, and several other matters, all have been fulfilled. Some were told me three years before they were known: others sooner, and some later, as our Lord related them to me. I always mentioned them to my confessor, and to this widow, who was my friend, with whom I had liberty to talk freely; and she (as I learnt afterwards) discovered them to others, who know that I do not lie: this our Lord never allowed me to do in anything, and much less in matters so important, for I always spoke the whole truth. A cousin of mine dying suddenly, I was exceedingly troubled, because he

had no time to confess. I was told in prayer that my sister should die in this way, and therefore that I was to go to her, and exhort her to prepare for death. This I told to my confessor, and as he did not give me leave to go, our Lord mentioned the matter to me several other times; and when I acquainted my confessor with this, he bade me go, for there was no harm in doing so. She lived in a certain village; and I came there without saying anything to her at first, or telling her the reason at once. But I proceeded by little and little, and gave her what light I could in everything. I persuaded her to confess often, and, above all things, to take care of her soul. As she was very pious she did so. Having continued in this way for four or five years afterwards, and taken very great care of her conscience, she died without seeing any one, or being able to make her confession. It fortunately happened, that she had been to confession only a week before. I was exceedingly glad when I heard of her death; she was a very short time in purgatory: it was not, I think, quite eight days after, when one morning after I had communicated, our Lord appeared to me, and I saw Him conduct her to glory. During all those years, up to the very moment of her death, I never forgot what had been said to me, nor did my companion, who, upon the unexpected news of her death, came to me quite amazed, to see how punctually the words were fulfilled which our Lord had spoken to me. May He be blessed forever, who takes such care of souls, that they may not perish! Amen.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE SAINT CONTINUES THE HISTORY OF THE FOUNDATION OF ST. JOSEPH'S MONASTERY, ETC.

HAVING now lived with the above-mentioned lady more than half a year, our Lord so ordered things, that a devout nun of our Order (Maria de Jesu) came to hear of me, though she was more than seventy leagues from this place. She happened, however, to be traveling this way, and understanding that I was here, she went some miles out of her

road in order to see me. Our Lord inspired her the same year and month that He had moved me, to erect another monastery of our Order: through this desire, she sold all she had, and went to Rome barefoot, in order to obtain leave. She is a woman of great penance and prayer, and our Lord had bestowed upon her many favors: our Blessed Lady also appeared to her, and bade her execute her design. She so surpassed me in serving our Lord, that I was ashamed to appear before her. She showed me the despatches she brought from Rome; and, during the fortnight that we lived together, we arranged how we should have these monasteries built. Till I had consulted with her, I never knew that our rule, before it was mitigated, forbade our having property. I was unwilling to found the house without revenue, because my intention was, not to harass ourselves with the care of providing what was necessary for our support, not reflecting on the many cares property brings along with it. But as our Lord taught this blessed woman, she knew well, though not able to read, what I, with all the study of our constitutions, was yet ignorant of. When she told me this I was glad, though I was afraid the Superiors would not consent thereto, but that they would say, "I attempted extravagant things, and should not undertake matters for which others might suffer on my account." Had it concerned myself only, nothing would have withheld me from founding the house in poverty; rather did I feel great pleasure in thinking that I was to observe the counsels of Christ our Lord, because His Majesty had already given me strong desires of poverty.

Thus, for my own part, I made no doubt but that it was for the best, for long before I had wished this might be the case suitable to my state, to go begging for the love of God, and to have nothing, neither house nor anything else. But I was afraid, that if our Lord did not give the same desires to others, they might, perhaps, be discontented; and also I was afraid lest it might be a cause of some distraction, for I saw some poor monasteries not very recollected, not considering that their poverty came from want of recollection, and not their want of recollection from their poverty. Solitude makes not Religious the richer, and God is never wanting to those who truly serve Him. In a word, my faith

was weak, but not so that of this servant of God. Though I asked the opinions of many on this matter, yet hardly any one was for this project, neither confessors nor the learned whom I consulted. They gave so many reasons against it, that I knew not what to do ; for when I understood that the rule enjoined it, and that it tended to promote greater perfection, I could not be persuaded to admit revenues. And though I sometimes found myself convinced by their reasons, yet, when I afterwards returned to my prayers, and beheld Christ so very poor and naked, I could not have the patience to be rich : and so I begged of our Lord, with tears, that He would so arrange things that I might see myself poor as He was. I found so many inconveniences in having revenues, and I saw so many troubles and distractions would arise from them, that I did nothing but dispute with the learned. I wrote to that Dominican Father who had assisted us, and he sent me in writing two leaves of objections and theological reasons against the project, assuring me he had deeply studied the matter. I answered, that I would not follow that theology which forbade me following my vocation, and my vow of poverty, and the counsels of our Saviour, in all perfection ; nor did I wish that he would assist me, in this point, with his learning. If I met with any one who took my part, or was of the same mind as myself, I rejoiced greatly. The lady with whom I lived assisted me in this matter very much. Some told me, at first, they liked the project very well ; but, considering the matter afterwards more carefully, they found so many difficulties in it, that they labored all they could to dissuade me from it. My answer was, that since they had changed their mind so suddenly, I was resolved to follow the opinion they gave first.

About this time it happened, that as this lady had never seen the holy man, Peter of Alcantara, our Lord was pleased, through my entreaties, to bring him to her house. And as he was a true lover of poverty, having observed it for many years, he knew well what great riches were to be found therein ; and, accordingly, he was of great assistance to me, and he commanded me, on no account, to desist from my design. Thus, with his opinion and approbation, being one who could much better than others deliver his judgment, on

account of his long experience, I resolved to proceed no further in consulting others.

Being one day in prayer, earnestly recommending this matter to God, our Lord said to me, "By no means neglect to found the house in poverty, and this is the will of my Father as well as mine; I will assist you." These words were said in a rapture, and with such effect, that I could not possibly doubt of their coming from God. Another time He told me, "That in having revenues I should have confusion," with several other things in praise of poverty, assuring me, that whoever should serve Him, should not want necessities; and of this want (as I said), for my part, I was never afraid. Our Lord also changed the mind of the Religious, the Dominican, who had formerly written to me against founding the house without revenue. I was now exceedingly delighted at having heard this from our Lord, and having had the opinions of other persons; and hence by resolving to live upon alms, I thought I already enjoyed all the wealth in the world.

At this time my Provincial released me from the obedience he had put me under, of living in that lady's house, leaving it to my choice, either to go or to stay, as I liked best, until the time came for the election of a prioress in my monastery. I was informed that many intended to give me this office, the mere thought of which so afflicted me, that I resolved to endure any torment for God's sake with joy; but no one could in any way prevail on me to accept this dignity; for, in addition to the trouble, which was great, because the nuns were numerous, together with other motives, I never loved to be in office, but always refused it, thinking it would be very dangerous to my conscience, so that I thanked God I was not there. I wrote to my friends, begging of them not to vote for me.

Being very pleased on seeing myself out of this noise, our Lord said to me, "Do not neglect, on any account, to go; and since you desire a cross, there is a good heavy one prepared for you: do not refuse it, for I will support you: go immediately." These words afflicted me extremely, and I did nothing but weep, because I thought the "cross" was to be elected superioress; and this I could not persuade my-

self would be good for my soul in any way, and I knew not how I could avoid it. I mentioned the matter to my confessor, who commanded me to depart immediately, for it was clearly greater perfection; but, because the heat of the weather was then excessive, he allowed me to remain a few days longer, lest the journey might injure me, for it was sufficient if I arrived in time for the election. But our Lord having ordered things otherwise, I wished to obey His command instantly, for I was so extremely disturbed that I could not pray; and I thought I was wanting in obedience to our Lord's commands, and by being treated there kindly, and made much of, I was unwilling to go away, and expose myself to suffering. All I gave to God was but words; and since I could live where there was greater perfection, why did I neglect it? If I died on the way, be it so. To this was added a heaviness of soul, and being deprived by our Lord of all pleasure in prayer. In a word, I was in such a state, that to stay was such a torment to me, that I begged of the lady to allow me to depart, because my confessor, seeing me in this state, had already told me to go, God having moved him as He had me. She felt my intended departure so much, that this proved another affliction for me, for she said "it had cost me much trouble, and many importunate requests, to prevail on the Provincial to allow me to come here."

I considered it very extraordinary that she consented, on account of the grief she felt; but, as she feared God, and as I told her my departure would tend greatly to the Divine honor, besides giving her many other reasons, and holding out some hopes that she would see me again, she consented with much difficulty. As for myself, I now felt no sorrow at all about my departure, because when I understand that anything tends to promote greater perfection, and to give greater glory to God, I am contented; and the joy I found in pleasing Him, took away the grief I felt in leaving this lady (who I perceived regretted my departure exceedingly), and in leaving others also, and especially my confessor, who belonged to the Society of Jesus, and with whom I was much pleased. But the more I perceived that I lost these consolations for God, the more I was pleased at losing them. I

could not understand how this could be, for I clearly perceived these two contraries, viz., to delight and console myself, and to rejoice in that which grieved me to my very soul; for here I lived in ease and comfort, and had an opportunity of spending many hours in prayer. But, on the other hand, I saw I was about to cast myself into a fire, our Lord having already signified this to me, by telling me I was to endure a heavy cross (though I never thought it would prove so heavy, as afterwards I found it); and yet, in spite of all these things, I departed cheerfully, and was, as it were, out of myself, because I could not commence the battle immediately; and since it was our Lord's pleasure I should, His Majesty gave strength to my weakness.

As I have already remarked, I could not understand how this would happen; I thought of this comparison. If I had in my possession a jewel, or something which gave me great pleasure, and should happen to know that one whom I loved more than myself wished to have it, whose pleasure I preferred to my own, it would certainly give me more satisfaction to be without that jewel than to keep it, because thereby I should please the person whom I loved so tenderly; and, as this desire of pleasing him would exceed my own pleasure in possessing it, so likewise it would remove the sorrow I might feel in parting with that jewel, or anything else I loved, and the pleasure I took therein. Hence, though I did not wish to go, on account of the opportunity I enjoyed in that lady's house for my prayers, and through my leaving persons who I saw felt my departure so much, which (as I am naturally very grateful) would at another time have served to afflict me deeply; yet now, even if I wished, I could not be sorry.

Not to delay my journey a day longer was so important to the business of this blessed house, that I know not how it could possibly have been concluded, had I then delayed. Oh! the immense greatness of God! Often am I astonished when I observe, how particularly His Majesty was pleased to help me in founding this little chamber of God (for such I believe it to be), and this lodging in which His Majesty delights; for, being once in prayer, He told me, "that this house was the paradise of His delight;" and so it seems His

Majesty has chosen those souls whom He has conducted there, and in whose company I live with great confusion to myself; because I myself could not have known how to desire such persons for this purpose,—persons of such austerity, poverty, and prayer, who suffer everything with such pleasure and joy, that every one considers herself unworthy of being admitted to such a place, and especially some whom our Lord has drawn there from out the vanities and pleasures of the world, wherein they might have lived contentedly, according to its laws and customs. And our Lord has here so doubled their joys, that they clearly see how, even in this life, they have gained a hundred-fold for one which they left, and therefore they are never weary with giving thanks to His Majesty. Others our Lord has changed from good to better. To the young He has given courage and understanding, in order not to desire anything else, and to know, that even here below, if they wish to live in quiet, they must separate themselves from all worldly pleasures. To those who are older and infirm, He gives strength (as He has given before) to enable them to endure the same penance and austerities as the others do.

O my Lord! how does Thy power appear! we need not seek out reasons for what Thou wishest to happen, since Thou makest things so possible beyond all human calculation, that Thou makest us understand nothing more is required, but only to love Thee sincerely, and to forsake everything in good earnest for Thy sake, that so Thou, O my Lord! mayest make everything easy for us. Here one may say, that Thou wishest to intimate there is some difficulty in observing Thy law, since I see none, O Lord! nor do I understand how the road which leads to Thee is strait. I find it a royal road, and not a narrow path; a road along which he who walks in good earnest, walks the more securely. Those who avoid the occasions of sin, are far removed from narrow passes, and are in no danger of falling from rocks. That I call a narrow path, and a bad one, which on one side has a very deep valley, down which one may easily slide; and on the other, a steep precipice, down which the careless fall, and are dashed to pieces. He that loves Thee, O my eternal God! walks securely along a broad and royal road, far from precipices;

he stumbles not, when Thou, O Lord ' extendest Thy hand to him. If, however, he should sometimes fall, yet, such falls will not ruin him if he love Thee, and not the things of this world.

If men walk along the valley of humility, I cannot understand why they are so afraid of putting themselves in the way of perfection. May our Lord grant us in His goodness to understand, what a poor security it is to be in the midst of so many manifest dangers, as are to be met with by following the maxim and opinions of the world, and that true security consists in endeavoring to advance still further in the way of God. Let us fix our eyes upon Him, and fear not lest this Sun of Justice should set, or leave us wandering by night: we shall not be lost, if we do not first abandon Him. Men fear not to go among lions, every one of which seems as if it would tear them in pieces; I mean honors, pleasures, and delights, for so the world calls them; but here, the devil makes us afraid of little mice. A thousand times am I astonished at this; and ten thousand times would I be satisfied with weeping and proclaiming aloud my great blindness and wickedness, in order to try if I could be of any use in making others open their eyes a little. May He open them, who can do so, in His goodness, and may He never allow mine to grow blind again! Amen.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SAINT, CONTINUING THE SAME SUBJECT, INFORMS US HOW THE MONASTERY OF ST. JOSEPH WAS AT LAST FOUNDED.

HAVING now left that city (Toledo), I went on my journey very cheerfully, being resolved most willingly to suffer whatever our Lord might be pleased to send me. The same evening that I arrived here, there came the letters and brief from Rome for the erection of the monastery, so that both I and all those who knew how much our Lord hastened my coming, were astonished when they understood how necessary my presence was, at that very conjuncture, when our Lord brought me to this place, because here I found the Bishop,

and that holy man Peter of Alcantara, and that other gentleman, a great servant of God, at whose house this holy man lodged; for he was a person with whom the servants of God were accustomed to be entertained hospitably and courteously. These two prevailed upon the Bishop to admit the monastery; and this was no small favor, considering the house was to have no revenue. But he was so great a friend to all those who he saw were determined to serve God, that he soon consented to the proposal. That holy old man, Peter of Alcantara, approved of it, and did all he could, sometimes with one and sometimes with another, to promote it, and to induce them to assist us. Had I not come at this particular time, as I have said, I cannot imagine how the business could have been effected, for this holy man remained her but a short time (not more, I think, than eight days, and during that time he was very ill), and soon after our Lord took him to Himself. It seems our Lord had preserved him till he had finished this business, for it was a long time since he had been ill, I think more than two years.

Everything was done with the greatest secrecy; for had not this been the case, nothing could have been accomplished, for the people disliked the undertaking exceedingly, as was afterwards seen. Our Lord so disposed things, that a relation of mine fell ill, he being from home at the time; and so dangerously ill was he, that leave was given me to go and take care of him: and on this occasion nothing transpired, though some persons had a little suspicion of the affair, but they had no certainty of it. It was wonderful to see that he lay no longer ill than was necessary for the business; and when it was requisite he should recover (in order that I might be disengaged, and the house be empty), our Lord suddenly restored him to health, so that he himself wondered at the circumstance. I had great trouble in endeavoring to persuade sometimes one, and sometimes another, to admit the monastery; and also with the person who had been ill, and with the workmen, to induce them to make haste, and clear the house, and finish it as soon as possible, that so we might have at least the form and appearance of a monastery, for a great deal was yet wanting to complete it. My companion, the widow, was not here (for we thought it best for her to

keep away, in order to disguise the matter the better); and I saw clearly that a great deal depended on despatch, and this for many reasons: one was, that every hour I was afraid I should be commanded to return to the monastery of the Incarnation. The troubles I endured here were so numerous, that they made me think this was the cross mentioned by our Lord, though it seemed to me a very light one in comparison with that heavy cross, which our Lord told me I was to bear.

Everything being now prepared, our Lord was pleased that on the feast of St. Bartholomew, some ladies took the habit, and the most Blessed Sacrament was then placed there; and thus, with full license and authority, this monastery of our most glorious Father St. Joseph was established in the year 1562. I was present to give them the habit, together with two other nuns from the monastery of the Incarnation. Now as this house (converted into a monastery) was the same that my relation dwelt in; for, as I have mentioned, he purchased it in order the better to conceal the real object, I had leave to live in it: and I did nothing but by the advice of the learned, in order not in any point to offend against obedience; and these persons seeing that, on many grounds, the monastery tended to the reputation and advantage of the whole Order, told me I might proceed in the business, though I acted with great secrecy and caution, in order that my Superiors might know nothing of the matter; and rather than commit the slightest imperfection they might discover in me, I would have given up a thousand monasteries, much more *one*; this is very certain. For though I was desirous to separate myself from every one, and to follow my profession and vocation with the greatest perfection and enclosure, yet I desired this in such a way, that whenever I understood it would tend more to God's honor to abandon all this, I would have done it with tranquillity and cheerfulness, as I did before. I seemed then to be, as it were, in a kind of glory, to see the most Holy Sacrament on the altar, and shelter given to four poor orphans (for they were admitted without dowry), who were great servants of God; for it was intended at the beginning that such persons should be taken in who by their example might

prove a foundation to the new edifice ; and that we might attain our object of high perfection and prayer, by which a work would be effected that would, I was confident, contribute to the glory of our Lord, and to the honor of the habit of our glorious Mother ; for this was my sole desire. Besides, it gave me great consolation to behold that effected which our Lord had so strictly commanded me to do, and to see one more Church in this place, under the title of my glorious father St. Joseph, than had been before. Not that I seemed to have done anything in this business myself, for I never had, nor have I now any such thought, for I always knew it was our Lord who did everything. And what little I had done was attended with so many imperfections, that I find I rather deserved to be blamed than to be praised. But it was a great pleasure to see that His Majesty had made use of me, though so very wicked, to be the instrument for so noble a work ; and I was so transported thereat, that I was, as it were, out of myself in profound prayer.

When all this was finished, I think it was some three or four hours afterwards, that the devil made an attack upon me in the following manner. He represented to me that what I had done had perhaps been ill done, and suggested whether I did not act contrary to obedience by attempting to found the monastery, without a command from the Father Provincial—(for I imagined he might take some offence at my subjecting it to the Bishop before I had acquainted him, although as the Provincial was unwilling to admit the monastery, I thought he would not care much). The devil also suggested to me, whether those sisters who lived here in such austerity would be contented ; whether they might not sometimes want victuals ; whether it were not foolishness for any one to put such an idea into my mind : had I not a monastery of my own ? In a word, the command our Lord had given me, the many opinions of others whom I consulted, the prayers I offered up without ceasing almost for two years,—all had now escaped my memory as completely as if I had never entertained such things. I only remember it was my fancy. All virtues, and even faith itself, seemed then to be suspended in me, without having the power to exercise one of them, or to defend myself from his blows.

The devil also represented to me, that as I wished to keep enclosure in so strict a house, and was afflicted with so many infirmities, how should I be able to endure such penance, and to leave a house so spacious and delightful, and where I lived so contentedly, and had so many friends? That perhaps the sisters would not be to my liking; that I bound myself to too much; that possibly I might fall into despair; and that perhaps the devil instigated me thereto, to deprive me of my peace and quiet, and thus I should be unable to continue my prayer, being so disturbed, and might in the end lose my soul. Thoughts of this nature the devil represented to me altogether, so that I had no power to think of anything else; and this was accompanied with such affliction, obscurity, and darkness in my soul, that I cannot express it.

Seeing myself in this state, I went to visit the most Blessed Sacrament, though I was unable to recommend myself to our Lord, being in such agony, as if I were in the agonies of death. To mention my state to any one I dared not, because I had not a confessor appointed for me.

O my God! what a miserable life is this, in which there is no secure contentment, nor anything without change! A very short time before I was so happy, that I thought I would not have exchanged my happiness with any one on earth; and immediately the same thing which had caused such happiness tormented me in such a way that I knew not what to do. Oh! did we carefully observe the events of our life, every one would see by experience how little we ought to esteem either its joys or its sorrows.

This certainly seems to me to have been one of the sharpest attacks I ever had to endure during my whole life: it appears as if my soul had a presentiment of all I was to endure, though had it lasted it would not have amounted to so much as this. But our Lord did not abandon His poor servant in her sufferings, for He always supported me in every tribulation; and so He did in this, for He gave me a little light to understand those thoughts came from the devil, and that he suggested all these to terrify me with his lies. Then I began to remember the strong resolutions I had made of serving our Lord, and the desires I had of suffering for His sake; and I considered that, if I intended to execute them, I must

not seek after ease ; that if I met with troubles there would be merit too ; and that if I bore them to honor God, they might serve instead of Purgatory. What was I afraid of ? If I desired crosses, these were good heavy ones ; and the more opposition, so much the more gain ; and why did I want courage to serve one to whom I was so much indebted ? With these and other considerations, doing violence to myself, I promised before the most Holy Sacrament to do my utmost to obtain leave to come and dwell in this house ; and in case I could do so with a good conscience, to vow perpetual enclosure. As I was forming these resolutions the devil immediately vanished, and left me quiet and content, and so I have continued ever since. All that is observed in this house respecting enclosure, penance, and other matters, have become extremely pleasant, and are considered to be little or nothing : the delight also which we experience is so very great, that sometimes I think I could not have chosen in the whole world anything sweeter. This must be, in some measure, the reason why I now have better health than ever I had ; or because there were both a reason and a necessity why I should do what all the rest did, perhaps our Lord was therefore pleased to give me this consolation to enable me to do it, though with pain : and this strength of mine all wonder at, who know my infirmities. Blessed be He who gives every gift, and who can do all things by His power !

I was very weary and tired with this combat, and I laughed to myself at the devil, for I saw clearly it came from him. I believe our Lord permitted it (for during twenty-eight years and more, since I have worn the habit, I never knew, even for a moment, what sadness meant), in order that I might understand what a great favor He had bestowed upon me in this way, and from what a torment He had freed me ; and also, that in case I saw any one else in the like state, I might not wonder, but rather compassionate her, and be able to console her.

This combat being now ended, and desiring to take a little rest after dinner (for all the previous night I had hardly any sleep, and during several other nights I was full of cares and troubles, besides being tired from all the troubles of the preceding days), I was informed that what had been done

was known in my monastery of the Incarnation, and also in the town: immediately, for the reasons already mentioned, there arose a great uproar and disturbance, which seemed to be, in some measure, justifiable. The Prioress immediately commanded me to come to the monastery instantly. When I received her message, I went immediately, leaving my nuns very unhappy. I saw I should now meet with many troubles: but as the house was already established, I did not trouble myself much about them. I gave myself to prayer, beseeching our Lord to help me, and my Father St. Joseph that he would bring me back again to his monastery; and I offered up to him whatever I was to suffer. Being exceedingly desirous of an opportunity of suffering something for His sake, and of being able to serve Him, I went there thinking they would certainly put me into prison. This I thought would be a great comfort to me, for there I should not speak to any one, and would be able to repose a little while in solitude: and this was necessary for me, for by conversing so often with people, I became, as it were, ground to the dust.

As soon as I arrived, I gave an account of myself to the Prioress, who then became somewhat pacified. But they all sent for the Father Provincial, and the cause was to be heard before him. When he came, I was summoned to appear before him, and I was exceedingly delighted to see myself suffer something for the love of our Lord; for I found that I had not, in this case, offended His Majesty, nor done anything against my Order, but rather had endeavored to promote its interest with all my strength, and for it I would willingly have died; for it was my sole desire that the rules should be observed with all possible perfection. I called to mind the sentence passed on Christ, and saw how little that was which I endured. The Provincial blamed me very sharply, for I acknowledged my fault to him, as one very guilty; but he did not blame me so severely as the offence deserved, and considering what so many had told him. I did not wish to excuse myself, because I was resolved to suffer; but I desired he would rather pardon and punish me than entertain any angry feelings against me. In some things I saw clearly they condemned me wrongfully: for they

said, I had commenced this undertaking to get myself a name and reputation, and so on. But in other things I was convinced that what they said was true; as, for instance, "that I was the worst of all the nuns; that not having observed the rules used in this house, how could I think of observing them with greater strictness in another? That I gave scandal to the people, and introduced novelties." These accusations did not give me any trouble or pain, though I appeared to be afflicted, lest I should seem to disregard what they said to me. At last, the Father Provincial commanded me to declare there before the nuns, my reasons, and the object of my actions. As I was recollected within myself, and our Lord assisted me, I gave my reasons in such a way, that neither the Provincial nor the nuns present could find any cause to condemn me. I spoke afterwards with the Father Provincial alone, and informed him more in particular of the success of the business. He was quite satisfied, and promised that, if I could succeed in appeasing the city, he would give me leave to remove to the new house, because the tumult in the place was very great, as I shall now relate.

Two or three days after, the mayor and magistrates of the city, together with some of the chapter, met together, and all declared they would on no account consent to the establishment of the new house, because it was a manifest injury to the city: that the most Blessed Sacrament should be taken away, and that they would not in any way allow the matter to go further. They appointed several divines from every Order to give me their opinions. Of these, some were silent, and others condemned the business, and came to the conclusion that the house should be dissolved. Only one Father, a doctor of divinity of the Order of St. Dominic (he was against us, not on account of its being a monastery, but because it was poor), said, "that there was no necessity for dissolving the house so suddenly; that the subject ought to be carefully considered, since there was time enough for it; that this case belonged to the Bishop," &c. These words did a great deal of good; for, considering the excitement, it was a wonder the people did not immediately pull down the building. But it was to be a monastery, because our Lord was pleased it should be, against whose will all of them

united together could do but little. They gave their reasons, and showed great zeal; and thus, without their offending God, they made me and all who were favorable to the business (for some such there were) suffer and endure great persecutions. The tumult and excitement of the people were so great that no one talked of anything else; and all condemned me, running first to the Provincial and then to my monastery. I was no more moved by what they said against me than if they said nothing; but the fear lest the house should be dissolved, and seeing that those who assisted me lost their credit, and knowing what affliction they endured, all this grieved me exceedingly. As to what was said about myself, I was rather glad of it; and if I had had a little faith, I should not have felt the least alteration. But a falling off in any one virtue, is sufficient to lay asleep all the rest. During the two days in which the meetings were held among the people, I was very much troubled; and being exceedingly sad, our Lord said to me, "Dost thou not know I am powerful? What are you afraid of?" And He assured me the monastery should not be dissolved. These words consoled me very much.

In the mean time the king's council was informed of the whole of the proceedings; and an order came that an account should be drawn up, on our part, how this monastery was to be founded. Here, however, a great contest began; for on the part of the city some had gone to the court, and some were also obliged to go on the part of the monastery: but we had no money, and I knew not what to do. Our Lord so ordered, that the Provincial never commanded me to desist prosecuting the business; for he is such a friend to any good work, that though he might not assist the business, he would not put any obstacle in the way. And he would not grant me leave to remove to the new house till he saw what the result would be. These servants of God remained alone, and did more by their prayers than I did with all my labors, though I was obliged to use my utmost endeavors. Sometimes all seemed lost, especially one day before the Father had come, it happened that the Prioress commanded me not to do anything in this business, which was in reality to give up everything. I went to our Lord and said to Him,

“This house is not mine, it is established for Thee; and since there is no one to conduct the case, do Thou undertake it.” Having spoken these words, I felt as great repose, and as free from care, as if I had the world to plead for me; and I immediately considered the business as completed.

A priest (Gonzalo de Aranda), a great servant of God and friend to every perfection, who had always assisted me, went to court to attend the business, and was exceedingly careful to promote it; and that devout gentleman (Francisco de Salcedo), whom I have already mentioned, labored exceedingly in the matter, and did all he could to favor us; not, however, without suffering many troubles and persecutions. I always esteemed him, and do still esteem him as our father. But our Lord inspired those who assisted us with such zeal and fervor, that each one took up the business as if it had been his own in particular, and his life and honor had been at stake therein; being, however, no further concerned than because they thought it would tend to the glory of God. Our Lord's help to a certain priest, whom I have already mentioned (Gaspar Daza), one of those who was of great assistance to me in this affair, was evidently seen: for in another great assembly held in the city, he appeared in behalf of the bishop, and stood up alone against every one, and at last appeased them by proposing certain expedients, which were sufficient to delay the design of dissolving the house, and to stop their fury. But nothing could induce them wholly to desist; for they soon returned again, and seemed willing to lose their lives if they could dissolve the monastery. It was this servant of God who gave the nuns the habit, and set up the most Blessed Sacrament, for which he endured very great persecution. This opposition lasted almost half a year; and to relate all the great afflictions I endured during that time would be too tedious. I was astonished to see what mischief the devil was able to do against a few poor women, and how all the people could imagine that twelve women and a prioress could be so injurious to the city, for they were not to exceed that number (I speak to those persons who withstood us), and these women, too, led very austere lives. But supposing there was some injury or error therein, it would all fall upon themselves, and the city would not

suffer any loss: but they fancied so many misfortunes would happen, that they opposed the monastery with a good conscience. At length the people began to yield; and they came to the conclusion, that in case the monastery were endowed, they would admit it, and be content it should go on. I was now so afflicted with seeing the trouble of all those who assisted us, more than I was with my own, that I thought it would not be wrong to receive revenue till the storm was over, and afterwards I might refuse to take any. And sometimes I likewise imagined (like a wicked and imperfect creature), it might perhaps be our Lord's pleasure, since without this revenue we could not carry on, and already I had consented to this agreement. The night before it was to be concluded, the agreement having now commenced, our Lord said to me, while I was in prayer, "Daughter, make no such agreement, for if once you begin to admit revenue, the people will not afterwards allow you to refuse it;" adding also other things.

The same night there also appeared to me the holy man Peter of Alcantara, who died a short time before, and had written to me before his death, hearing of the opposition and persecution we endured; he said he was glad the house was founded in the midst of such great opposition, for it was a sign our Lord would be truly served therein and honored, since the devil labored so much to hinder it. That I should not by any means consent to have it endowed; and two or three times he inculcated this point in his letter with great earnestness, assuring me that if I continued firm, all would succeed as I desired. I had already seen him twice since his death, and observed the glory he was in; and so I was not at all frightened, but rather rejoiced, for he always appeared like a glorified body, full of glory, and it gave me the greatest delight to behold him. I remember that the first time I saw him, he told me amongst other things, the great bliss he enjoyed, and how happy his "penance" was which he had performed during life, whereby he had obtained so high a reward. But because I think I have spoken in another chapter on this subject, I will say no more here, except that this time he showed a little severity, and only told me "by no means to have revenue;" and he asked me

why I did not take his advice ? And immediately he vanished, leaving me greatly amazed. The next day I soon acquainted the above-named gentleman (he being the individual to whom I had recourse in everything, and who exerted himself in the cause more than any one else) with what had happened, and told him not to consent in any way to admit revenue, but to go on with the suit. He was more firm in the matter than I was, and glad I was. He afterwards told me how unwilling he was to speak on this agreement.

Afterwards there rose up another person, an eminent servant of God ; and as things were now in a good way, he wished the matter might be referred to the judgment of the learned. And here I found trouble enough ; for some of those persons who assisted and consented thereto were of the same opinion. But this was an artifice of the devil, more deep and subtle than all the rest. Our Lord, however, helped me in everything ; for it is impossible for me, writing thus so briefly, fully to relate what was endured during the two years from the time the monastery began till all was completed. This last year and the first half-year were the most troublesome.

The city being now somewhat appeased, Father Bañez, the Dominican doctor who had assisted us, though not present, made haste to come to Avila ; and our Lord brought him there just at the time he was wanted ; and he did us great good, for he told me afterwards he had no reason or occasion to come, but that it was only by chance he heard we wanted him. He remained here as long as was necessary. At his departure, he induced by certain means the Father Provincial to give me leave to remove to this monastery (and to obtain this so soon seemed impossible), and to take some other nuns with me, and also to instruct those who were already there. The day we entered was a day of great consolation to me. When I was praying in the church, before I went into the monastery, being as it were in an ecstasy, I saw Christ our Lord, who I thought received me with great love ; and He put a crown upon my head, and thanked me for what I had done for His Mother.

At another time, when all the nuns were at prayer in the choir, after Compline, I saw our Blessed Lady in very great

glory, who seemed to be protecting us all under a very white robe, which she had on. By this I understood what a high degree of glory our Lord would bestow on the religious of this house. When the Divine Office began to be recited, the people also began to have a great devotion to this monastery. More nuns were received, and our Lord began to move those who had opposed us the most to favor us exceedingly, and to give us alms: so that now they began to like what they had so much disliked before; and by degrees they gave up all contention, and acknowledged that they knew this work was favored by God, since, notwithstanding so much opposition, His Majesty was pleased it should prosper. No one now thinks it would have been well not to have founded the monastery, much less to have dissolved it. And thus they are at present so careful to provide us with alms, that without our asking any one for them, our Lord moves them to send us relief, that so we may live without wanting necessities: and I hope in our Lord it will always be so: for as the nuns are but few, if they do what they ought (as at present His Majesty gives them grace to do so), I am sure they will never want anything, nor will there be any necessity for them to be burdensome to any one, for our Lord will take care of them, as He has hitherto done.

It is for me the greatest consolation to see myself placed here among souls, so disengaged from the things of this world. Their whole study is to know how to advance further in the service of God. Solitude is their delight, and the very thought of their seeing any one, even should it be one of their nearest relations, is a great affliction to them, unless they hope to be able to excite such persons to renewed love for their spouse. Thus no one comes to this house who has not this object in view; for otherwise, neither are they welcome to others, nor others to them: their language is all about God, and they neither understand anything else, nor are they understood except by those who speak only of Him. We observe the rule* of our Lady of Mount Carmel, and this in all its strict-

* The rules were drawn up by Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the year 1209. St. Teresa's Reformation of the Order dates from the year 1562, when her Constitutions were drawn up, and approved by Pius IV. in 1565.—(See the Rules in Yezpez, "*Vida de Santa Teresa*," cap. xi. lib. ii. p 145.)

ness and integrity, as it was confirmed by Pope Innocent IV., in the year 1248, and the fifth of his Pontificate. Methinks that all the troubles which have been endured for the monastery have been well bestowed. For though the rule is somewhat rigorous, because flesh-meat is never eaten, except in case of necessity, and we fast eight months in the year, and observe other things, as may be seen in the primitive rule; yet the sisters consider it not to be severe enough, and therefore they observe additional mortifications, which seem to be necessary in order to keep the rules with greater perfection. I hope in our Lord that what has begun will prosper and increase, as His Majesty has promised me. The other house which that pious lady of whom I spoke was instrumental in erecting, was likewise favored by our Lord, and was founded in Alcala, not without strong opposition, and being obliged to endure very great troubles. In it I know that our rule is observed with all strictness and devotion. May our Lord grant that all things may tend to His glory and praise, and to that of the glorious Virgin Mary, His Mother, whose habit we wear! Amen.

I think your Reverence will be tired with this long account I have given you about our monastery; but it is very short in comparison with the many afflictions we endured, and the numerous wonders our Lord wrought in its foundation, of which there are many witnesses, who can take their oath as to the truth of them. And now I entreat your Reverence, for the love of God, that whatever you judge to be superfluous in this account you will erase; but that you will preserve in it all that relates to this monastery; and after my death give it to the sisters who may be in the monastery, for it will animate those who come after me to serve God, and to endeavor to prevent what has commenced from being dissolved, but rather that the house may go on from good to better, when they see how much our Lord has done for it, in founding it by means of such a base and wicked creature as myself. And since our Lord has been pleased to express His approval of this work in so especial a manner, I think they will do very wrong, and will be severely punished, who shall dare to attempt any *relaxation* of that perfection which our Lord has established here, and assisted in such a way that it is observed with the

greatest pleasure and sweetness : hence it is evident that the rule is very tolerable, and may with great ease be practiced, as there are so many helps for those who live always well, who desire alone to enjoy their spouse, Jesus Christ : and this is all that they aim at, delighting to be in solitude alone with Him. The sisters do not exceed thirteen ; for I learnt from the opinions of many persons that this number is sufficient ; and by experience I have seen, that in order to procure and maintain the spirit which now exists in the house, and to live on alms without being a burden to any one, it is requisite the number should be no more. And in these matters, rather believe one who, with so great difficulties, aided by the prayers of so many persons, has done that which seemed to be the best. The great pleasure and joy which we all experience during the years we have lived in this house, besides the state of our health, so much better than what we formerly enjoyed,—all this clearly proves that the number is the most convenient. But whoever thinks the rule rigorous or difficult, let them blame their own want of courage, and not the rules observed here, since even delicate and sickly persons bear all things with pleasure and great sweetness. Let such persons go to other monasteries, where they may secure their salvation in a way agreeable to their own mind.*

* The remainder of the Saint's history will be found in the Book of her Foundations. In the History of the Foundation of Medina del Campo, she says, "I lived five years in the monastery of St. Joseph, at Avila, after it was erected; and these now seem to me to have been the most peaceful part of my life, the want of which repose and tranquillity my soul often feels. . . . I took great delight in conversing with such pure and holy souls, seeing that all their care was only to serve and praise our Lord. I praised our Lord for beholding such heroic virtues," &c. The Book of the Foundations is already published. It is interesting and edifying beyond description.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE SAINT MENTIONS THE GREAT BENEFIT SHE RECEIVED FROM OTHER HEAVENLY FAVORS.—MANY PARTICULARS ARE GIVEN RESPECTING HER ECSTASIES AND REVELATIONS.

I AM unwilling to mention any more of those favors which our Lord had bestowed upon me ; since those which I have already related are too numerous, that they should be thought to have been shown to so wicked a creature. But yet, to obey our Lord who has commanded it, and your Reverence also who expects it, I will mention some more things here, for His greater glory. May His Majesty grant that it may serve for the profit of some soul to see, since our Lord has vouchsafed so highly to favor such a wretched creature as I am, how much more He will do for such as serve His Majesty in good earnest ; and that every one may be encouraged thereby to please His Majesty, since even in this life He grants us such earnest pledges.

But here it is to be observed, that in these favors which God bestows on a soul, there is sometimes more, sometimes less glory ; for the glory, joy, and consolation which He imparts, are so much greater in some visions than in others, that I was quite amazed to find so great a difference of enjoying, even in this life. And sometimes our Lord is pleased, in one vision or rapture, to give so much that it seems impossible to desire anything beyond it in this life ; nor does the soul desire more, nor would she wish for more joy and pleasure. Since our Lord has been pleased to show me how great the difference is in heaven between the glory enjoyed by some, and that which is enjoyed by others, I see very clearly that even here also there are no limits set in giving, when our Lord pleases ; and so I could likewise wish that there were no limits set in my serving His Majesty, and employing my whole life, strength, and health in this way ; I would not lose, through any fault of mine, the least degree of further enjoyment. I even go so far as to declare, that if the choice were offered to me, whether I would rather remain subject to all the afflictions of the world, even to the

end of it, and then ascend by that means to the possession of a little more glory in heaven ; or else, without any affliction at all, enjoy a little less glory, I would most willingly accept of all those troubles and afflictions for a little more enjoyment, that so I might also understand more of the greatness of God, because I see that he who understands more of Him, loves and praises Him so much the more. I say not but that I should be contented, and should esteem myself very happy to be in heaven, though it were but in the lowest place, for our Lord would thereby show abundance of mercy to me, who had been condemned to so horrible a place in hell ; I beseech His Majesty that I may go to heaven, and that He will not consider my great sins. What I say is this ; that "if our Lord would give me grace to labor much for Him, and if I were able to do it, I would not on any account, however much it cost me, forego the gain of any degree of glory, through my own fault." Miserable creature that I am, who had once lost all by my numerous offences.

It is also to be remarked, that in every favor of a vision or revelation which our Lord bestowed upon me, my soul received some great gain ; and in some visions the gain was very great indeed ; for, by seeing Christ our Lord, His admirable and inexpressible beauty has remained imprinted on my mind, and I remember it to this day ; for, in this case, only once would have been sufficient, how much more so very many times in which our Lord vouchsafed to impart this favor to me. From this sight I also derived another considerable advantage. I was formerly subject to a very great fault, by which much hurt came to my soul, and it was this : whenever I began to observe that any person had a liking for me, and was agreeable to me, I began to have so much affection for him, that my memory would bind me in a manner to be still thinking of him, though yet without any intention at all of offending God ; but I would be very glad to see him and to remember him, and consider the good qualities which I found in him ; but this was so prejudicial that it did my soul a great deal of harm. But when once I beheld the great beauty of our Lord, I saw none afterwards which could bear comparison with it, nor which was able to

occupy my thoughts; for, by casting my eyes upon the image of Him who is engraven in my mind, I remained with so much liberty in this respect, that everything which I have seen since this has become loathsome to me, in comparison with the excellencies and graces which I discovered in our Lord; nor is there any knowledge, or any kind of pleasure, on which I set a value, in comparison with that which comes by hearing only one single word which proceeds from His divine mouth; how much more so many as I have heard! I consider it impossible, unless our Lord should permit it for my sins, that the remembrance of this should entirely leave me, and that any creature should ever so far possess my mind as that I should not instantly be free, by recurring a little to the remembrance of this, my Lord. It happened sometimes with some of my confessors (for I always love those who direct my soul, because I consider they hold the place of God, and methinks it is ever there where I employ my affection the most), that thinking I was secure with them, I was apt to show them extraordinary kindness; but they, being servants of God and cautious persons, would be fearful, lest I should become too much attached to them, though in an innocent manner, and they would sometimes show they were displeased at it. This happened afterwards, when I began to subject myself to be directed and commanded by them; for before I did not bear them so much love. I smiled at myself when I considered how much they were deceived, though I did not always tell them so plainly how little I tied myself to any one, as I was sure of this in myself. but I told them enough; and when they became more intimate with me, they knew how much I was indebted to our Lord, for these suspicions which they had of me were always in the beginning.

I also began to have more love and more confidence in my Lord after I had seen Him, as one with whom I now held a continual conversation. I saw that though He was God He was also man, and that He did not wonder at the weakness of men, for He well knows our miserable nature, which is subject to falls of so many kinds, on account of the first sin which He came to repair. Although He is my Lord, I may still treat with Him as with a friend, because I

know He is not like the grandees we are accustomed to meet with in this world, who place all their greatness in a certain affected authority, and who appoint hours and seasons for an audience, and admit those only to speak to them who are distinguished persons. If any poor man has any business to transact with them, it will cost him many labors and favors before he can get it settled. But what if he has some business with the king himself! Poor people must not presume to come near him, but be content to inquire who are his favorites (and these we may be sure are not such as tread the world under their feet, because such persons are accustomed to speak the real truth, and so are not fit for a court), and so recommend their affairs to them; there those things are not usual; but they dissemble whatever they dislike, and scarcely do they think of doing such a thing for fear of being disgraced.

O King of Glory, and Lord of all kings! Thy kingdom is not set out with such straws as these, since it has no end! Nor is there any need of third persons to introduce us to an audience with Thee! By our seeing Thee, we instantly perceive that Thou alone deservest to be called Lord; so great is Thy Majesty that there is no need of many guards and attendants, in order that we may know Thou art a King; whereas, if any earthly king were left quite alone, he would hardly be known to be a king, for, in himself he is no more than other men, and therefore something must appear about him to make men believe that he is the king; and he has so much more need of using these external helps, because otherwise the people would make no account of him; for his appearing so powerful is not from himself, but his grandeur and state arise from those about him. But who is able, O my Lord and my King! to represent that Majesty which Thou hast? It is impossible to help seeing that Thou art a great Emperor in Thyself, and I am quite amazed to behold Thy Majesty. But I am still more amazed, O my Lord! to see united with this Majesty the great humility and love which Thou showest to such a wretched creature as myself; for we may speak and treat with Thee about all things, even as we wish, when once we have lost that first amazement and dread which we feel at the sight of the majesty of

Thy presence, though there still remains a greater fear of offending Thee ; but not the fear of the punishment, for this we do not regard at all, in comparison with the misery which it is to lose Thee. Here are some of the benefits which I have derived from this vision of our Lord, besides other great effects which it leaves in my soul. If the vision be from God, it makes itself understood by the effects, whenever the soul has light ; for, as I have often said, our Lord is pleased that it should remain in darkness, and not see this light ; and then it is not so strange that one so wicked as myself should have some fear.

It is only very lately that I happened to be for eight days in such a state, that it seemed I neither had, nor could have, any knowledge of what I owe to God, nor yet any memory of His favors ; but my soul was so inebriated and employed upon I know not what, nor how, though not upon bad thoughts ; but, with respect to good ones, so very sluggish, that I laughed at myself, and took pleasure in beholding the baseness a soul is in, when our Lord does not vouchsafe to be continually working in her. She sees very well, that even in this state she is not without possessing Him, for it is not like as in those great afflictions which, I have said, I sometimes suffer ; for, though the soul brings wood, and does all the little she can on her side, there is no enkindling the love of God within her. It is a great mercy of His that some smoke is observed, for thereby we know that she is not dead, and our Lord comes again to enkindle it ; but then the soul seems to be in such a state, that everything only serves to choke her the more, though we break even our heads in blowing, and weary ourselves in arranging the wood. I think the best thing is to give herself wholly up, and to remember that she is unable to do anything of herself alone, and therefore to apply herself (as I have said) to other meritorious things, for our Lord, perhaps, takes away prayer from her, that the soul may exercise herself in those other acts, and so understand, by experience, how little she is able to do of herself.

This very day I have solaced myself with our Lord, and presumed to complain to His Majesty in these words : “ How is it, O my God ! that it is not enough for Thee to keep me

in this miserable life, and that I endure it all for Thy sake, and that I wish to live where all this trouble is, because I cannot enjoy Thee, without at the same time eating and sleeping, and transacting business, and conversing with every one; and all this I suffer for the love of Thee? Thou knowest well, O my Lord! that this is a very great torment to me; and in those few moments which remain to me for enjoying Thee, Thou art yet pleased to hide Thyself. How can this be reconciled with Thy merey? And how can Thy love towards me permit it? I believe, O Lord! that if it were possible for me to hide myself from Thee, as Thou dost hide Thyself from me, I think and believe so much concerning the love Thou hast for me, as to be sure Thou wouldst not endure it. But Thou art still with me, and always beholdest me. This is not to be endured, O my Lord! I beseech Thee to consider that this is doing an injury to one who loves Thee so much." These and such like words I spoke, though I considered, first, how very tolerable that place was which had been prepared for me in hell, in comparison with what I had deserved. But sometimes the love I bear our Lord is so very extravagant, that I scarce know what I do, except to complain with all my understanding in this manner; and our Lord endures everything from me. May so good a King be praised! But can we approach the kings of this world with such presumption as this?

And yet I am not surprised that we do not dare to speak to earthly kings in this way, or to those great persons who are their representatives, for they are men whom we have reason to fear. But now the world is so changed, that we should be obliged to live longer, in order to have time enough to learn all its punctilios, and modes, and fashions, if we would have any time to spend in the service of God. I bless myself when I see what passes. The truth is, that already I scarcely knew how to live in the world, when I came to understand this; for now it is not considered a jest, when there is any inattention shown, in treating men with much more ceremony than they really deserve; but they so truly take it for an affront, that you must profess your desire to make satisfaction, if there be (as I was saying) any omission; and God grant that they believe your professions.

I repeat it again, that I do not really know how to live, because these things do greatly afflict a poor weary soul. She sees that, on one hand, she is commanded always to employ her thoughts on God, and that it is necessary for her to do so, in order to free herself from many dangers; and, on the other side, she also sees, that it concerns her not to omit anything regarding the punctilios of the world, under pain of not giving offence to those who place their chief honor in these things. As for me, they tire me quite out, and I could never come to an end of making satisfaction, for it was not in my power (however much I endeavored) to prevent myself from making many faults in this respect; and these are not considered little in the eyes of the world. It is true, that religious Orders ought to be exempt from all these attentions, and there is reason for it: but, no; people assert, "that monasteries ought to be, as it were, so many courts for good breeding, and that their inmates should know the rules of politeness." I do not really understand this kind of language. I think some saint has said, that a monastery should be a court to instruct those who wish to be courtiers in heaven. But now things are understood in quite a different way. But how they who should be continually employed in pleasing God, and in endeavoring to abhor the world, are also to be obliged to bestow so much care and attention in pleasing those who live in the world, and that in things which change so often, this I cannot comprehend.

But though it were possible for one to learn all these rules, yet they would soon be changed. Even for the titles which are expected in letters, a *chair* should be founded, that so the Professor might teach us how such and such people were to be addressed; for sometimes the paper is to be left blank on one side, and sometimes on the other; and he who used to be styled "Your Worship," must now be called "The Honorable." I know not where things will stop; for I am not fifty years old, and yet I have seen such changes in my life, that now I know not how to live. How then will those who are now young know how to conduct themselves, if they should live long? I have really great compassion for spiritual persons, who are obliged to live in the world for certain holy purposes; for it is a terrible cross to bear this. If all could

agree together, and profess themselves to be ignorant, and could be content to be considered as such in these sciences, they might free themselves from a great deal of trouble. But into what fooleries have I cast myself? From speaking of the greatness of God, I have come by degrees to speak of the baseness of the world. Since our Lord has enabled me by His grace to leave it, I am resolved no more to speak about it. Let those love it who, with so much trouble, encourage those toys; and may God grant, that we may not pay dearly for them in the other life, which is without change! Amen.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE SAINT MENTIONS SOME GREAT FAVORS WHICH OUR LORD WAS PLEASED TO SHOW HER, IN ACQUAINTING HER WITH CERTAIN SECRETS OF HEAVEN, AND BY GIVING HER VISIONS AND REVELATIONS, ETC.

BEING so very ill one night, that I thought I might excuse myself from prayer, I took my rosary to employ myself vocally, not taking any pains to recollect my understanding, though as to my exterior I was sufficiently recollected, being in an oratory. But when our Lord wishes, all our endeavors serve but to little purpose; for after I had been praying a little in this way, there suddenly came upon me a rapture of the Spirit, with so great impetuosity that there was no power in me to resist it. I seemed to be placed in heaven, and the first persons whom I saw there were my father and mother; and I also saw some other things so very wonderful, and in so very short a time (as long only as one would say Ave Maria), that I was amazed, thinking it was too great a favor for me. With regard to the time being so very short, I may perhaps be deceived, for it may have been longer, but it seemed to me at least to be very short. I was afraid of an illusion; but yet to me it seemed none. I knew not what to do, for I was quite ashamed to go with the account to my confessor; not through humility, as I thought, but because I fancied he would make a jest of it, and say, "what a St.

Paul, or a St. Jérôme this woman has become, to see such heavenly things!" And because these glorious saints had such visions as these, it made me so much the more fearful of myself, so that I did nothing but weep bitterly, because I thought there was no probability that such favors should be shown to me. However, I went to my confessor, notwithstanding all my repugnance; for though it was painful for me to mention these things, yet I never dared to conceal anything from him, on account of the great fear I had of being deceived and deluded. When he saw me in such great affliction, he comforted me very kindly, and told me many consoling things to free me from the trouble I was in.

It has happened to me several times since, that our Lord has shown me still greater secrets: there is no means, however, of the soul being able to see more than our Lord is pleased to represent to her, nor is it possible; and hence I never saw more than our Lord was pleased to show me at each time: but this was so very much, that the least part of it was sufficient to make me quite amazed, and to improve my soul very much, and help her to undervalue and despise all the things of this life. I wish I knew how to explain the least part of that which I saw represented; but when I am thinking how to do it, I find it impossible. For though the light which we see here, and that which is represented there, be all light, yet there is so great a difference that there is no comparison; for the brightness of the sun itself is very obscure when compared with that brightness. In a word, the imagination of man, however subtle it may be, cannot paint or describe this kind of light, nor any other of those things which our Lord gave me to understand, and this with such excessive delight as cannot be expressed; for all the senses enjoy such a superior degree of sweetness that cannot be comprehended, and therefore I think it best to say no more about it.

I was once for more than an hour in this state, when our Lord showed me wonderful things; and appearing not to be far from me, He said, "See, daughter, what they lose who are against Me: do not fail to tell them of it." But, O my Lord, what good will my telling them do, since their own evil actions have blinded them, if Thy Majesty do not give

them light? Some there are to whom Thou hast given it; and they have profited much by the knowledge of Thy greatness: but, O my Lord, they see them given to such a wretched and wicked creature, that I wonder I find any one to believe me. Blessed be Thy name and Thy mercy! For I, at least, have seen an evident amendment in my own soul from these things: how glad I should have been afterwards, if I might still have remained in that state, and not come back to live here again, for the contempt in which I held the whole world was very great, and it seemed to be no better than dung to me: and now I see how meanly we are employed who are detained here.

While I remained in the house of this lady (Louisa de la Cerda), whom I have already mentioned, it once happened to me, when I was ill with a violent pain in my heart, that looking on me with great compassion, she one day commanded certain jewels of hers to be brought forth, which were of great value; and one in particular, of diamonds, which she prized at a great price. She thought that the sight of them would delight and revive me. But I smiled at her within myself, and was grieved to see what mean things men esteem, when I considered what our Lord has laid up for us; and I thought how impossible a thing it would be for me to put any value on such toys as these, though I should endeavor to do so, unless our Lord should first take away the memory of other things. This kind of favor gives the soul so great a dominion, that I know not whether it can possibly be understood by any other person but such as possess it, because it is a proper and natural disengagement of the soul from all created objects; and this comes without any labor on her part. God does everything; for His Majesty shows us these truths, and this in such a manner that they remain so imprinted on the soul, as to make us clearly see that it was not possible for us to acquire them, especially in so short a time, by any exertions of our own.

I also came to have very little fear of death, of which formerly I had great dread; but now it seems a very easy thing for such as apply themselves to the service of God; for in a moment the soul sees herself freed out of this prison, and placed in repose. The way by which God carries the

soul up, in these raptures, to show her such wonderful things, seems to bear a very close resemblance with the passage of a soul out of the body at the hour of death, since in a moment she beholds herself possessed of all this good. I omit here the consideration of those pains felt when the soul is borne out of the body, for we should make little account of this: and they who love God in good earnest, and have bid adieu to all the pleasures of this life, are wont to die with more sweetness and resignation.

It also seems to me, that these favors did me much good towards making me know my true country, and being convinced that we are only pilgrims here below: it is very necessary to consider what passes there above, and to know where we are to live forever; for when one goes to live for good and all in a country, it is a great help towards enduring all the troubles of the journey, to know that it is the land where we shall enjoy very great repose. It also enables us to consider heavenly things, and to endeavor that our conversation may be in heaven: this is done with ease. It is likewise a great gain, because merely looking up to heaven recollects the soul; for as our Lord is pleased to show her some glimpse of that which is there, she is thereby induced to pause and meditate upon it. And sometimes it happens, that they who I know are living there are the only companions I choose to comfort myself with,—these being the persons who seem truly alive; and those others who live here on earth appear to be so very dead, that this world affords no company at all to me, especially when I have those great impulses. All seems to me but a dream, and what I see with my eyes looks like a jest. But that which I have already seen with the eyes of my soul is the very thing she desires; and because she sees herself to be yet far off from it, this is death to her. In a word, the favor is exceedingly great which our Lord grants to that soul to whom He gives such visions as these; for they help her much in all things, and especially in bearing a heavy cross, because nothing satisfies her now, but everything disgusts her; and if our Lord did not permit one to forget it sometimes (though yet we remember it again afterwards), I know not how one could live. May He be blessed and praised forever! I beseech His

Majesty, by the blood His Son shed for me, that since He has vouchsafed I should understand some part of these great benefits, and in some measure to begin enjoying them also, it may not happen to me as it did to Lucifer, who lost all by his own fault. Do not permit this, O my Lord ! I beseech Thee by what Thou art ; for it is no small fear which I have sometimes (though at other times, and even very generally, the mercy of God gives me security), that since He has been pleased to deliver me from so many sins, He will not forsake me now, so as to let me be lost. This I beg of your Reverence, that you will always pray for me. But, in my opinion, the favors which I have already mentioned were not so great as that which I will now relate, for many reasons : particularly for the great courage and strength which have remained in my soul on that account, although if each of the other favors be considered in itself, it is so great that nothing else can be compared with it.

One day, after mass, it being the vigil of Pentecost, I went to a very retired place, where I often used to pray ; and I began to read in a certain book, written by a Carthusian on this festival ; and I found there those signs by which they who are beginners, or proficients, or perfect, may understand whether the Holy Spirit is with them or no. Reading what was said there of these three states, it seemed to me that God, through His goodness, was in this manner present with me, as far as I could understand. And while I was praising Him for this blessing, I called to mind that when I had read the same thing formerly, I stood much in need of my present state ; and thus I came to know how much I was indebted to our Lord for the great favor He had bestowed upon me. I began also to consider the place I had deserved in hell for my sins, and I gave great praises to God, because I found my soul, as I thought, so extremely changed, that I could hardly know her. Being fixed in this consideration, there came a great impetuosity upon me, without my knowing the occasion of it. It seemed as if my soul were endeavoring to get out of my body, for now she could not possibly contain herself, nor could she find herself capable of remaining any longer in the expectation of so great a good. This was so wonderful an impulse, that I could not tell what to

do with myself; and it was very different, in my opinion, from those which I have had at other times; nor did I know what was the matter with my soul, nor would I admit she was so much altered. I leaned myself on one side, not being able to sit upright, for I found my natural strength began to fail me. When in this state I saw a dove above my head, very different from the doves of this world, for it had not the like feathers, but the wings seemed to be composed of certain little shells, which darted forth a wonderful splendor. The dove was much larger than any ordinary one; and I thought I heard a noise which it made with its wings, for it was hovering over me about the space of an Ave Maria. My soul was then in such a state, that, losing herself in an ecstasy, she also lost sight of the dove. By entertaining so sweet a guest, my soul became quiet, though so wonderful a favor might well have disturbed and affrighted her: but as she already began to enjoy, all fear soon vanished, and with joy began the quiet, she remaining in a rapture. The glory of this rapture was extremely great. I remained during the greater part of Whitsuntide so stunned and transported that I knew not what to do with myself, nor how to contain within me so great a grace and favor: I neither heard nor saw (so to speak), on account of my great interior joy. From that day my soul has found a very great improvement, as she enjoys a more sublime love of God, and stronger virtues, than she did before. May our Lord be praised and blessed forever! Amen.

Another time, I saw the same dove over the head of a Dominican Father: only I thought that both the beams and the brightness of the wings extended themselves much further. I was then given to understand that he was to win souls to God.

Another time I saw our Blessed Lady putting a very white garment on a Professor of Divinity belonging to the same Order, of whom I have often spoken. She told me, that for the service he had done her, in helping to erect this house, she gave him that mantle, as a sign that his soul should be preserved for the future in purity, and that he should not fall into mortal sin. I am confident it proved so; for he died within a few years after, and his life and

death were attended with such penance and sanctity, that there can remain no doubt of his salvation, as far as we are able to judge. A friar, who was present at his death, assured me, that before he expired he told him how St. Thomas had been with him. He died with great joy, and with a desire to be free from this banishment. Since then he has sometimes appeared to me in very great glory, and told me many things. He was so given to prayer, that when before he died he wished to omit it, on account of his great weakness, he was not able to do so, for he had many raptures.

He wrote to me a little before he died, asking me what means he had best employ, because as soon as he used to finish mass, he fell into raptures, which would last long, without his being able to help himself. God at last gave him a reward for the great services he had done for Him during his whole life. Of the rector of the Society of Jesus, whom I have mentioned before, I have seen some things concerning the great favors our Lord bestowed upon him: but I will not mention them here; for fear of being too long. A severe affliction happened to him once, by being unjustly persecuted, at which he was greatly afflicted. As I was hearing mass one day, I saw Christ on the cross, when the priest elevated the Host. He spoke certain words to me, which I was commanded to tell him for his comfort; and others to put him on his guard against something that was to happen; and to represent to him how much our Lord had endured for his sake, and that he should prepare himself to suffer. These words gave him great strength and courage, and all happened to him just as our Lord had foretold.

I have seen wonderful things relating to the religious of a certain Order,* and of the whole Order together. I have sometimes seen them in heaven, with white banners in their hands, and many other things, as I have said, very admirable. Accordingly, for this Order, I have a great veneration, for I have often had communication with them, and I see that their life is conformable to what our Lord gave me to understand regarding them.

Being one night in prayer, our Lord began to utter some

* The Society of Jesus.

words to me, by which He brought to my remembrance how wicked my life had been. These words gave me both pain and confusion; for though they were not spoken with any severity, yet they caused within me such tender feelings of sorrow and grief as quite to dissolve me. We find more help towards the knowledge of ourselves by only *one* of these words, than we should be able to acquire in many days by considering our own misery: for it so engraves the truth in the soul, that we cannot possibly deny it. He represented to me those inclinations of mine, which I had formerly entertained with so much vanity; and He told me that I was to set a great value upon the desires I had, that He would abide in me—desires which formerly I had directed to such evil objects. At other times, He bade me remember how formerly I had considered it as a point of honor to go against His honor; and at other times, that I should remember how much I owed Him, since when I was committing the greatest offences against Him, He used to be doing me favors. If I have any faults (which are not few), our Lord then makes me understand them so well, that I am, as it were, ready to annihilate myself; and because I have many faults, this happens very often. It happened that my confessor reprehended me, and when I thought to find consolation in prayer, it was there that I found real blame.

But to return to what I was saying. When our Lord began to bring my wicked life to my remembrance, which cost me so much tears, and when I considered that then I had done no good, as I thought, I began to think within myself, whether He might not wish to bestow some new favor upon me; because whenever I have received any particular favor from our Lord, it has generally been after I had annihilated myself in this way. And our Lord acts thus with me, that I may see the more clearly how far I am from deserving these favors. A short time after, my soul was so absorbed that it seemed to be almost out of my body: at least, it could not be perceived that I lived in it. Then I saw the most sacred Humanity of our Lord, in more excessive glory than ever I had seen it before. This was represented to me by a certain admirable and clear notice of His being placed in the bosom of His Father; and yet I

know not how to explain it: for it seemed to me, that without seeing, I saw myself present before the Divinity. I remained so amazed, in such a manner, that I think some days passed before I returned to myself: but I always thought that I had the majesty of the Son of God present to me, though not like the former. This I understood very well; but the sight remains so engraven on my imagination, that I cannot free myself from it (though it was represented in so short a time) for some time. It is, however, both a comfort and a great benefit to my soul.

I have seen this vision three other times; and this, in my opinion, is the most sublime vision which our Lord ever granted me the favor to see; and it brings with it the greatest benefits. It seems that the soul is greatly purified by it, and it takes all strength away from our sensuality. It is a vehement flame, which seems to burn up, and even perfectly to consume all the desires of this life; for though (glory be to God for it) I had before no inclinations to vain objects, it was here declared to me, in a very distinct manner, that all was vanity; and, in particular, how vain were all the titles and grandeurs of this world. It also gives us great information how to raise up our desires to the pure truth. A reverence for God remains so imprinted on the soul, in such a way that I know not how to describe it: it is very different from whatever we can acquire in this world. It also produces a strange amazement in the soul, to consider how she, or how any creature can presume so far as to dare offend such an exceeding great Majesty.

Sometimes I have mentioned the effects of these visions, and that a soul receives sometimes more, sometimes less, profit from them; but from this vision the profit was wonderfully great. After I used to communicate, and when I remembered the incomparable Majesty which I had seen, and which I saw was the very same that is in the most Holy Sacrament (and sometimes our Lord is pleased to let me see Him in the Sacred Host), the very hair of my head stood quite on end, and I thought I was wholly annihilated. O my Lord! if Thou didst not hide Thy greatness, who dare presume to approach so often as we do, so filthy and miserable a creature, to so great a Majesty? Blessed be Thou,

O Lord! May the angels and all creatures praise Thee, who dost so measure things according to our weakness, in order that, enjoying such wonderful favors, Thy immense power may not terrify us, being so weak and miserable.

It might happen to us, as it once did to a laboring man (and this fact I know to be correct), who found a treasure, which being greater than his mind, caused him to fall into sadness when he saw himself possessed of the treasure; hence by little and little he came to die through mere care and affliction, not knowing what to do with his treasure. Whereas, if he had not found it altogether, but some one had given it to him by degrees, and had thus supported him, he would have lived more contentedly than when he was poor, and it would not have cost him his life. O riches of the poor! how admirably do you know how to sustain souls! How careful are you, without letting them see too much at once, to show them great treasures by little and little! When I see so great a Majesty concealed in so small a thing as the Sacred Host (and so it is), I am in admiration at such great wisdom, and I know not how our Lord gives me courage and strength to approach Him, did not He who hath bestowed and still bestows such great favors upon me fortify me also herein: and it is not possible to dissemble the matter any longer, or cease to proclaim aloud such great wonders. What sentiments, then, ought so miserable a creature, and so laden with abominations, as I am, and who have spent my life with such little fear of God—what sentiments ought she to have, when she sees herself approach to a Lord of such great majesty, because He is pleased that my soul should behold Him? How shall this mouth of mine, which has uttered so many words against this same Lord, presume to touch that most glorious body, so full of purity and sanctity? The love which that countenance of such great beauty, tenderness, and affability, discovers to us, does more afflict and wound the soul for not having served Him, than do that fear and terror which are inspired by the majesty she beholds in Him. But what should be my feelings, after having seen on two occasions that of which I will now speak? I am really about to say, O my Lord and my Glory! that I have in some way done Thee a little service, by the great

afflictions which my soul has experienced in herself. Alas! I hardly know what I say; for I am now writing, though I scarcely am able to speak, because I find myself troubled, and almost out of myself, when I bring these things to my remembrance. If this thought came from myself, I might seem to have some reason for what I say, that I had done something for Thee, O my God! But since I cannot have so much if Thou do not impart it to me, there is nothing which I can attribute to myself. I am therefore Thy debtor, O Lord! and Thou art the party offended.

Going one day to receive the Blessed Sacrament, I saw two devils, with the eyes of my soul, more clearly than if I had seen them with the eyes of my body: they had a most horrible appearance, and seemed with their horns to encompass the neck of the poor priest. I also saw our Lord, with that majesty (of which I have already spoken), placed in the sinful hands of the priest, in the Host which he was about to give me, for I understood that soul to be then in the state of mortal sin. What a sight must it have been to behold Thy beauty, O Lord! in the midst of such horrible figures! These devils were so confounded and terrified by Thy presence, that they would willingly have gone from thence, if they could have obtained Thy leave. This sight gave me such great affliction, that I was scarce able to communicate; and I was in great fear, thinking that if it had been a vision from God, His Majesty would not, at such a time, have allowed me to see it; but it was permitted, that I might understand what power the words of consecration have, since God would not be kept away, however wicked the priest might be who pronounced them. Our Lord himself told me to pray for him, and that He allowed me to behold this vision, that I might see His wonderful goodness, in not forbearing to put Himself into the hands even of His enemy, and this for the good both of me and of all men. I understood then very clearly, how priests are bound to be much more virtuous than other men, and how terrible a crime it is to receive the most Blessed Sacrament unworthily, and how absolutely the devil has possession of a soul in mortal sin. This vision did me a great deal of good, and gave me a very

deep knowledge of what I owed to God. May He be blessed forever and ever!

On another occasion there happened to me something else, which amazed me extremely. I was in a certain place where a person died, who had lived very badly for many years, but for the last two years had been sick, and in some things seemed to be reformed. This man died without confession; but still I did not think he would be condemned. While, however, his friends were preparing the body for burial, I saw several devils take the corpse, and they seemed to be sporting with it, and practicing many cruelties upon it, which struck me with great terror, for they tore it with certain sharp hooks, and tossed it from one to the other. When afterwards I saw him taken to be buried, with the usual pomp and ceremonies, I considered the goodness of God in not permitting the soul even of that man to be defamed, but in so permitting it to be concealed that he was His enemy. During all the time of the office for the dead I did not see any devil; but, when afterwards they put the body into the grave, there stood such a multitude of them within, that I was utterly amazed to behold them, and I had need of great courage to conceal my emotions. I considered how those devils would treat that soul, when they exercised such tyranny over the poor body. Would to God that this dreadful spectacle which I saw, could have been seen also by those who are in mortal sin, for I think it would be a powerful motive to induce them to amend their lives. All this obliges me to know the more what I owe to God, and from what He has delivered me. I had great fears till I mentioned these things to my confessor, thinking the vision might, perhaps, be some illusion of the devil to defame that soul, though the man was not considered to be a very good Christian. However, the truth is, that whether it were an illusion or no, I am always frightened when I remember it.

And now, since I have begun to speak of visions which relate to the dead, I will also mention some other things concerning souls which our Lord has been pleased that I should see. But I will speak only of a few, for the sake of brevity, and because it is not necessary in the way of receiving any benefit. News was brought to me of the death of one who

had been Provincial here ; but when he died he was the Provincial of another province. I had transacted a great deal of business with him, and had also been indebted to him for some good offices which he had done me : he was a virtuous person. When I heard that he was dead, I was greatly troubled thereat, because I was afraid for his salvation, inasmuch as he had been superior for twenty years,—a responsibility I dread much, because it is very dangerous to have the care of souls. I went therefore in great trouble to an oratory to pray for his soul. I gave him all that good which I had ever done in my whole life, which was little enough ; and I besought our Lord, that His merits might supply for what that soul wanted in order to deliver her from purgatory. While I was begging this favor from our Lord in the best manner I could, he seemed to rise up from some deep part of the earth, on my right side, and so I saw him ascend to heaven with very great joy. He was very old before he died ; but he now seemed to be about the age of thirty, or rather somewhat less, and his face shone very brightly. This vision passed away very speedily, but yet I was so much comforted by it, that his death gave me now no more grief, though many others were troubled about him, for he was much beloved. The comfort my soul experienced was so great, that I had no care about anything else, and I could not possibly doubt but that the vision was true ; that is, no delusion. This happened but fifteen days after his death ; but still I was not negligent in procuring prayers to be offered up for him to God, and in praying for him myself, except that I could not do this so willingly, had I not seen this vision ; for when our Lord shows me a soul in this state, and I afterwards wish to recommend it to His Majesty, I cannot help thinking that it is as if I gave an alms to a rich man ; but learnt afterwards (for the man died at a great distance), that the death which our Lord granted to him was so edifying, that all were astonished at the self-knowledge, contrition, and humility with which he departed.

A nun died in our house about a day and a half before this occurred, whereof I am going to speak : she had been a great servant of God ; and while we were reciting for her soul the office of the dead in the choir, where I stood by and

assisted in reciting the verse, I thought in the middle of the lesson, that her soul rose from the same side as the other did, and so went to heaven. This was no imaginary vision like the last; but like others which I have mentioned before; yet these are no less certain than those others which are seen.

Another nun, between eighteen and twenty years of age, died in the same house. She had always been infirm, and a great servant of God, and very diligent in the choir. I thought for certain that she would not have gone to purgatory, on account of the long sickness she had endured, but rather that there would have been supernumerary merits. But while we were reciting the office, about four hours after she died, I perceived that her soul rose out of the same place, and went to heaven. Being one day in a church of the Society of Jesus, oppressed with those great afflictions and troubles, of which I have spoken sometimes, and which I still have both in soul and body, I found myself in such a condition, that I thought I was not able so much as to entertain one good thought. That night a father of the Society had died in the same house, and mass was then being offered for the repose of his soul. While I was recommending him to God as well as I was able, I fell into a very great rapture, and I saw him ascending into heaven in great glory, our Lord himself accompanying him by a particular favor.

Another friar of our Order, a very good man, was very dangerously ill; and I being then at mass, fell into recollection, and saw him departing out of this world, and going immediately to heaven, without entering purgatory at all; and he died, as I was told afterwards, at the very hour that I saw him. I wondered that he had escaped purgatory; but was given to understand, that as he was a religious, and had carefully observed the vows of his profession, the Bulls of indulgence granted in favor of the Order, had availed him towards his exemption from purgatory. This, I suppose, was signified to me, as implying, that more is required to make a religious than merely wearing the habit.

I will relate no more of these things, because (as I have said) there is no necessity for it, though our Lord has done me the favor to show me very many. But among all the souls which I have seen, I did not understand that any one

escaped going to purgatory, but only this last Father, and that holy man, Peter of Alcantara, and another holy man, of the Order of St. Dominic (Peter Ibañez). Our Lord has also been pleased to let me see the several degrees of glory to which they have been raised, the places being represented to me wherein they are : there is a great difference between some and others.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE SAINT GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF OTHER MIRACULOUS GRACES AND
SUBLIME VISIONS WITH WHICH SHE WAS FAVORED BY OUR LORD.

I WAS once very importunate with our Lord, that He would be pleased to restore sight to a certain person to whom I was under great obligations, who had become almost quite blind ; and I was afraid our Lord would not hear my prayer, on account of my sins. He then appeared to me, as He had done at other times, and began to show me the wound in His left hand, and with His right hand He drew out the great nail which had been fastened in it ; and I thought that some of the very flesh came out with the nail, by which it was evident how great was the pain it caused Him. The sight of it pierced my heart with grief. He told me, “ that since He had endured that for my sake, I should not doubt but that He would more willingly grant this request of mine ; and so He promised me, that I should ask Him nothing that He would not do ; for He knew already, that I would beg nothing of Him but what should be for His glory, and that He would grant this favor which I now begged for. He bade me also consider, that even when I did not serve Him, I had not desired anything of Him which He had not granted, even better than I knew how to ask ; and, therefore, how much more would He do it now, when He knew I loved Him ! And that I must not doubt His word.” I think eight days had not passed before our Lord restored sight to this person. I informed my confessor of this immediately when it happened.

Another time, there was a person sick of a very painful

infirmity, but as I do not know what the disease was, I cannot give the particulars. It was very insupportable, and he had been troubled with it for two months, and had been tormented in such a way as to be almost torn in pieces. My confessor, who was the rector I have mentioned, went to see him; and, as he took great compassion on him, he told me I must by all means go and see him, for he was a relation of mine. I went, and took so much pity on him, that I began to beg his health of our Lord, in a very earnest and importunate manner. In this I saw clearly the favor our Lord was pleased to grant me, for immediately the very next day, he was quite free from his pain.

I was once in very great trouble, because I knew a certain person, to whom I was much indebted, was resolved to do a thing which was greatly against the honor of God, as well as his own, and yet he was resolutely bent upon it. My affliction was great, because I knew not which way to find any remedy to make him leave it, and it seemed to me that there was none. I therefore begged very earnestly of God to apply one, but without seeing myself able to alleviate my pain. I then went to a little hermitage, somewhat retired, where there was a picture of Christ at the pillar; and I besought Him to do me that favor. While I was praying, I heard a most sweet voice speaking to me, as if in the act of whistling. At this I became greatly terrified, though I had a strong desire to hear what it said to me; but I could not, for it passed suddenly away. But when once my fear was removed, which was soon, I remained in such great quiet and joy, and such great interior delight, that I was amazed to see how only hearing a voice (and that with my corporal ears, and without any word) was able to produce so powerful an operation in my soul. I perceived thereby that what I had asked should be done, and accordingly all my solicitude was removed, as much as if I had seen it actually performed, as it was afterwards. I related the whole matter to my confessors, both of whom were then very virtuous and learned men.

I knew also a certain person who had resolved to serve God very seriously, and had practiced mental prayer for some time, and therein His Majesty had shown him many

favours ; and yet he omitted this kind of prayer upon certain occasions which fell in his way ; and he did not avoid those occasions, though they were very dangerous. This gave me very great affliction, because the person was one whom I loved much, and whom also I was bound to love. I think it was more than a month, during which I did nothing else but beg of God that He would bring this soul back again to Himself. At the end of this time, being one day in prayer, I saw a devil very near me, with certain papers in his hands, which he was tearing ; he seemed to be in a very great passion. This gave me much comfort, because thereby I knew that my request was granted ; and so it was, as I learnt afterwards ; for the individual had been to confession, which he had made with great contrition ; and he returned to God so earnestly, that I hope in His Majesty he will always advance in His service. May He be blessed by all men ! Amen.

With regard to our Lord delivering souls from grievous sins, at my humble supplication, and often bringing others to greater perfection, and freeing souls from purgatory, and doing many other extraordinary things, these favours of our Lord have been so numerous, that I should weary both myself and my reader were I to mention them. These have happened more frequently for the benefit of souls than of bodies. This is so well known, that there are many witnesses thereof. At first, I had many scruples about it, because I could not help believing that our Lord was pleased to do many things by my prayers (I omit here speaking of His goodness alone, which is the principal reason) ; but there are now so many particulars, and so well known by others, that I have no difficulty in believing this. It gives me, however, great confusion, because I find myself still more and more His debtor ; and, in my opinion, it increases my desire to serve Him, and it revives my love. But that which astonishes me still more, is, that those things which our Lord finds not to be convenient, I cannot beg of Him, though I might wish to do so, except with such little strength, spirit, and attention, that though I would fain force myself, it is impossible for me to do so in these, as in those other things which His Majesty intends to perform. Such, I see, I am

able to beg often, and with great importunity ; and though I am not particularly anxious about them, yet, methinks, they come before me of themselves. The difference between the two ways of asking is so great, that I am unable to explain it. Though I ask only for one favor (and herein I urge myself to beg the favor from our Lord, though I do not feel that fervor within me, which I do in those other cases, and yet these are closely connected with my welfare) ; still, it is as if a man were tongue-tied, who, although he would fain speak, yet cannot ; and if the people speak, it is in such a way that he sees they do not understand him ; but, in the other case, it is when a person speaks to another clearly and plainly, and whom he finds very willing to hear him. Let us say also that one of these favors is begged, as if we were engaged in vocal prayer ; and the other, by a contemplation so sublime, that our Lord represents Himself in such a way, that we understand that He understands us, and that His Majesty rejoices in doing us the favor which we beg of Him. May He always be blessed who gives so much, and to whom I give so little ! For what, O Lord ! does he do, who does not wholly annihilate himself for Thee ? And yet, how much—how much—how much, and a thousand times more might I say, how much am I wanting in this respect ? On this account, I do not wish to live (though I have other reasons also), because I do not live according to my obligations towards Thee. How full of imperfections do I see myself ! What lukewarmness in Thy service ! Sometimes I really wish I had no sense, that so I might not know how much evil there is about me : may He apply the remedy who can do so !

Being in the house of a certain lady, of whom I have spoken before, it was necessary to take great care, and always to be considering the vanity of worldly things, because I was much esteemed and praised there ; and there were many occasions into which I might have fallen, if I had looked to myself. But I looked up to Him, who has assured me, that He would always protect me ; as I am now speaking of having a true knowledge of things, I remember the great troubles which those persons, whom it has pleased God to endue with a knowledge of the truth, must suffer when

forced to treat with others about these earthly things, where so much is disguised, as our Lord Himself once told me. Many of the things which I mention here do not come from myself, but have been told me by my heavenly Master. And, because in all those things wherein I used to express myself positively in these words: "This I understand;" or, "Our Lord told me;" I find very great scruple either in adding or diminishing a syllable thereof, whenever I do not expressly remember every circumstance, I am accustomed always to mention that as in my own name. Some things, however, come from myself, though I do not remember anything of mine, which is good in itself, because there is no such quality in me, except what our Lord has given me, without any merit on my part. I call it a thing said by me, when it does not come to my knowledge by revelation.

But, O my God! how comes it, that even in spiritual matters, we are resolved many times to understand things just according to our own opinion, and to twist them from the true sense, as we always do with regard to the things of this world; and we think we must estimate our spiritual advancement, according to the years we have had some practice in prayer? It seems, also, that we wish to put a tax upon Him, who, subject to no restraint, bestows His gifts when He wills, and who can give more to one in half a year, than to another in many years. These things I have so often seen verified in many persons, that I wonder how we can have the least doubt thereof. But I firmly believe, that a man who has any talent in discerning spirits, and to whom our Lord has given true humility, will not be subject to this error. Such a person judges of things by their effects, and by the resolutions, and love produced; and our Lord gives him light whereby he may understand it; and by that he also discerns the proficiency and improvement of souls, and not by the number of years, because one may have obtained more in six months than another in twenty years. As I have said before, our Lord gives His favors to whom He wills; and frequently He gives them to such as dispose themselves best to receive them. There have now come to this house certain ladies, who are very young; but, as our Lord has touched their hearts, and given them a little light

and love (and this in a very short time, wherein He is pleased to impart some pleasures to them), they do not stay and pause, nor is any difficulty able to stop them; but they go on, without even remembering their meals; and they shut themselves up forever in a house, without any revenue, like a person who does not value his life, for the love of Him, who they know loves them. They abandon all things, nor have they any will of their own; nor do they represent to themselves, that sometimes they may, perhaps, feel unhappy through being so strictly enclosed; but all of them together offer themselves in sacrifice to God. How willingly do I allow them to get before me herein? And how ought I to be confounded and ashamed in the presence of God, to see that what His Majesty did not accomplish in me during so many years, since I began to use mental prayer, and He began to bestow favors upon me, He has accomplished in *them* within three months; yea, even with some of them in three days, though He bestowed upon them less favors than He did upon me; still, His Majesty rewards them well: I am quite certain, then, that they are far from being sorry for what they have done for the love of our Lord.

For this purpose, I wish we would remember how many years it is since we made our profession, and have practiced prayer; but not with the object of disturbing those, and making them turn back, who have advanced a great deal in a short time, that so we may induce them to go our pace. This would be to make them who fly like eagles (through the favors which it has pleased God to show them) to walk no faster than a strong hen; rather must we fix our eyes on His divine Majesty, and if we find those persons humble whom we find to be so much in advance, then we should let them have a free course; for certainly our Lord, who shows such great favors, will never suffer them to fall headlong. They put their trust in God, and this benefit they reap from the truths which faith teaches them: and shall not we then trust them? Must we wish to measure them by our measure, according to the littleness and lowliness of our minds? No! not so; for if we cannot acquire those strong affections and resolutions (and these cannot be well understood without experience), let us humble ourselves, and not condemn them.

By seeming to look at their advancement, we shall deprive ourselves of our own, and lose the occasion our Lord gives us for our own greater humility, and for better understanding how much we are still deficient in, and also that we may see how much more those other souls are disengaged from all earthly things than we are; and how much more closely they are united to God than we are, since His Majesty approaches so near to them.

I mean nothing more, nor do I desire to be understood further, than that I had much rather have such prayer for a short time, and which is found to produce such great effects (and these are known immediately; for it is impossible that one should be content to forsake the whole world at once, for the sole reason of pleasing God, without being impelled by the great force of love) than that which has continued for many years, and never made an end of resolving more at the last than the first to do anything for the service of God, unless it be some insignificant little things no bigger than a grain of salt, which has neither weight nor bulk, except what a bird might carry in its bill. Let us not look upon it as any notable effect or mortification when we make great account of doing some things for the love of our Lord, which it is a pity we should value at such a rate, however many such acts we may perform. I am myself one of these persons, and I continually forget the favors of God. I say not but that His Majesty will put some value on these little things, for He is good: but I do not wish to make any account of them, nor so much as see that I do them, since they are nothing. But pardon me, O Lord! and blame me not; for I must console myself with something, since I serve Thee in nothing: for if I really did serve Thee in great things, I would make no account of these nothings. Happy are they who do Thee service by their noble actions! If by envying them, and desiring to do the like, might be accepted by Thee as for payment of what I owe, I should not be very far behind in pleasing Thee. But, O my Lord! I am good for nothing: give me some value, since Thou lovest me so much.

There lately came a brief from Rome, ordering that this monastery should be incapable of having revenue. This circumstance completed everything: and though it cost me

some trouble to accomplish this object, yet it gave me great consolation to see things thus settled. Reflecting upon the difficulties I had met with, and praising our Lord for being pleased to have made use of me, I began to look back upon what had happened; and it is very true, that in every one of those particulars wherein there might be any appearance that I had contributed, I found many faults and imperfections, and sometimes little courage, and oftentimes little faith. Up to this time, when I see everything accomplished which our Lord told me should be done concerning this house, I never did come to any fixed belief that this would be the case, though yet I could not doubt it in the least: neither did I know how all this could be; but often it seemed impossible on one side, and yet it could not be doubted on the other. I mean, one could not help believing that the undertaking would not be accomplished. In a word, I found that our Lord himself did all the good which was done, and I all the evil; and so I gave over thinking about it, and would not call it to my remembrance, lest I might stumble on my numerous faults. Blessed be He who when He pleaseth draws good from them all. Amen.

I say, then, that it is a dangerous thing to go measuring the years during which we have practiced prayer: for although there may be humility, yet there may also be something else,—an opinion that we had deserved some favor for our pains. I do not deny but that these years have acquired some merit for us, and so we shall be well paid for them: but if any spiritual person shall think, that for the many years in which he has practiced prayer he deserves these great favors, I consider it certain he will never have them. It is not enough that he has been protected by God from committing such sins as he fell into before he gave himself to prayer, but now he must needs sue His Majesty for His own money, as the saying is. This does not seem to me profound humility, but yet it may be so: but I think it rather a boldness, since I who have such little humility never dare presume so far. But as I never did God any service, I begged no such favor from Him; whereas, if I had done any, I should have desired (more than any other) of our Lord, that I might be rewarded for my pains. I do not say but that a

soul may go on increasing by this means, and that God will make her amends, if her prayer has been humble. But we should not call to mind those years; for whatever we are able to do is all mean and vile in comparison with the least drop of that blood which our Lord shed for us. And if the more we serve the more we become His debtors, how strange that we should begin asking for recompenses, since if we pay a farthing of the old debt, He returns us a thousand ducats for it. For the love of God, let us leave these judgments which belong to Him. These comparisons are always bad, even in things of this world: and what will they be in that which God only knows? His Majesty gave a good example of this, when He paid the last as much as the first (in the parable of the Gospel).

I* have written these three leaves at so many different times during several days (for I had; and have still, as I said, so little leisure), that I forgot what I was beginning to say about this vision; and it is this:—Being one day in prayer, I saw in a great field, where I was by myself, people of different kind around me: it seemed to me that every one of them had arms in his hands to injure me: some had lances, some swords, some daggers, and others very long tucks.† In a word, I found I could not get out of this place in any direction without exposing myself to death, especially as I was alone, and had no one to take my part. Being in such great affliction of spirit that I knew not what to do, I lifted up my eyes and saw Christ our Lord,—not in heaven, but very high above me in the air; and He stretched forth His hand to me, and favored me in such a manner from that time, that I neither feared all the other people, nor were they able to do me any harm, even if they wished. This vision seemed at first to be without any fruit, but it has since done me a great deal of good, because I have come to understand what it meant. For shortly after, I found myself placed in almost a similar engagement, and I knew this vision was quite a figure and representation of the world. For all that is in it seems to carry with it weapons to injure our

* The Saint here resumes the thread of her discourse.

† “Estóques;”—long narrow swords,—tucks,

poor soul,—as honors, riches, and pleasures, &c. It is clear that the soul gets caught in a net before she is aware ; at least, all these things do their best to ensnare us : nay, friends, kindred, and (what amazes me more) even persons who are very virtuous. Afterwards I found myself so tied by them (they thinking in the meantime no harm was done by them), that I knew not how to defend myself, or what to do. O my God ! if I could relate all the various kind of troubles which I endured at this time, even after I had suffered what I have mentioned before, this would be sufficient to make one utterly abhor everything here below ; for it was, I think, the greatest persecution that ever I had to endure. I sometimes found myself so straitened on all sides, that I only found a remedy in lifting up my eyes to heaven, and calling upon God. I remembered very well what I had seen in this vision ; and it did me a great deal of good, towards making me not put confidence in any one ; for no one is firm and stable but God. In all these great afflictions which God sent me, He always provided some person or other who might assist me, in His name, as He assured He would, and as He showed me in this last vision, without attaching myself to anything, but wishing only to please Him : and this has been sufficient to support the poor little degree of virtue I had in desiring to serve Him. Be Thou blessed forever !

Being once very unquiet and troubled, so as not to be able to recollect myself ; and, moreover, being engaged in a battle and conflict, with my thoughts roving upon things not very perfect, and not seeming to myself to be so perfectly untied from all things as I used to be, when I saw myself so wicked, I began to be afraid lest the favors which our Lord had shown me might be illusions, and I remained in very great obscurity. While I was in this affliction, our Lord began to speak to me, and bade me “ not to be thus disquieted, but as I found myself in my present state, I should thereby understand how great a misery I should be in if once He should depart from me ; and that there was no security as long as we lived in this flesh of ours.” I was also given to understand how well our labor was employed in this conflict and war, since these combats would merit so great a reward. Our Lord likewise seemed to pity those who lived in the

world, adding, "that I must not think He had forgotten me: that He would never leave me, but yet that I must still do my part." These words He spoke with great tenderness and affection: and many other words also His Majesty often addressed to me, showing great favor, and which I need not here relate. These He often spoke with great love: "Thou shalt be mine, and I will be thine." And the words which I am always accustomed to say (and in my opinion I say them with sincerity), are these: "What do I care, O Lord, for myself, but only for Thee."

But these words and favors of His give me excessive confusion, when I remember what I am. Hence it seems (as I think I have often said, and sometimes say still to my confessor) there is more need of courage for receiving these high favors, than for enduring even the greatest afflictions. When this happens, I almost forget my good works, and then I remember how wicked I am, without any discourse of the understanding. This also seems sometimes to be supernatural.

Sometimes there came upon me such strong desires of receiving the most Blessed Sacrament, that I knew not how to express them properly. It happened one morning to rain so heavily, that it did not seem fit for me to go out of doors: however, when I was out, I was so far transported with this desire, that even though spears were set against my breast, methought I could have passed through them all; and how much more through water! As soon as I entered the church I was seized with a great rapture. It seemed as if the heavens were opened, and I saw there a throne which had been represented to me before, as I have told your Reverence, and above that another throne, upon which I understood (in a way I cannot express) that the Almighty rested, though I saw Him not. This throne seemed to be supported by certain animals, and I considered whether they might not be the Evangelists. But I neither saw how the throne was placed, nor who was sitting upon it, but only a very great multitude of angels were around it. These appeared to be much more beautiful than those others I had formerly seen in heaven. I have been thinking whether they were Cherubim or Seraphim, for they were very different from others in

glory, and they seemed to be all on fire. The glory which I then felt in myself can neither be written nor described, nor is any one able to conceive it, but only such as have been made partakers of it. I understand that whatever can possibly be desired was there united, and yet I saw nothing. They told me (though I know not who), that what I could do there was to understand that I could understand nothing, but that I might see the nothingness of all things in comparison with that. And it is true; my soul was afterwards confounded to observe that she was able to rest at all on anything created, and how much more to be affected by it, for everything seemed to me no more than an ant-hill. I communicated, and remained during the whole of the mass, though I knew not how it could be so. The time seemed to me to have been very short; and I wondered when the clock struck to find that I had been in the rapture for two hours.

After this I was amazed to see how by approaching to this fire, which seemed to come from above, out of the true love of God, the old man of defects, and lukewarmness, and misery, seems to be consumed (for however much I desired and endeavored to procure it, though I was willing to annihilate myself for the purpose); yet it was not in my power to get the least spark thereof, but only when His Majesty is pleased to give it. As I have read of the phoenix, out of whose ashes when she is burnt another springs up, just so does a soul become quite another creature, with desires wholly different, and with a courage so great, that she seems not to be what she was before, but begins to walk with a new kind of purity in the way of our Lord. As I was beseeching His Majesty that this might prove to be so in my case, and that I might begin afresh to serve Him, He thus spoke to me:—"Thou hast made a good comparison: see that thou forget not to endeavor always to be improving Thyself."

Being once in the same doubt, of which I have spoken above, whether these visions came from God, our Lord appeared to me, and uttered these words with severity:—"O ye sons of men, how long will ye be dull of heart?" He wished me to examine myself well on this point: whether I

had wholly given up myself to Him or no ; and that if I had given myself up and were His, I should believe He would not suffer me to perish. I was greatly afflicted when He uttered that exclamation ; but He turned to me with much tenderness and affection, and told me, “ that I must not afflict myself: that He knew well I would not fail to apply myself entirely to His service, and that He also would do what I desired.” He was then pleased to bestow the particular favor I was begging of Him, saying, “ that I should consider the love which was daily increasing in me, for thereby I might perceive that the devil had no part in it, and that I must not think God would consent that the devil should have so much power over the souls of His servants as to be able to give me such a clearness of understanding, together with such a repose of mind as I possessed.” He also made me understand, that since so many persons had told me “ that these visions came from God, I should do wrong if I did not believe them.”

As I was once reciting the Creed of St. Athanasius, “ Quicumque vult,” I was given to understand the manner how there was only one God in three Persons, and this in so clear a way that I was both comforted and amazed exceedingly. This did me a very great deal of good for increasing my knowledge concerning the greatness of God and His wonders. And now when I think or speak of the most Holy Trinity, it seems as if I knew something of the mystery ; and this gives me great pleasure.

On the feast of the Assumption of the Queen of Angels, our Blessed Lady, our Lord was pleased to do me this favor in a rapture : to represent to me her Assumption into heaven, together with the joy and solemnity with which she was received, and also the place she holds. I cannot describe what kind of a vision this was. The glory which my soul had, to see that hers is so great, was extreme ; and I felt great effects and improvement from such a sight, and desired to suffer still greater afflictions here. It also increased my desire to serve our Lady, seeing that her merit was so great.

Being one day in a college of the Society of Jesus, and the Fathers of that house then receiving the most Blessed

Sacrament, I saw a very rich canopy over their heads; and this two several times: when other persons communicated I did not see it.

CHAPTER XL.

THE SAINT CONTINUES THE SAME DISCOURSE, AND RELATES SOME MORE OF THE GREAT FAVORS OUR LORD SHOWED HER; SHE THEN FINISHES THE ACCOUNT OF HER LIFE.

BEING once in prayer, the delight which I felt was so great, that knowing myself to be unworthy of such a favor, I began to consider how much I deserved that place in hell, which I had seen prepared for me, and which (as I said then) I shall never forget. By means of this consideration, my soul began to be much more inflamed, and there came a rapture on me, but in such a manner that I know not how to explain it: for I seemed to be plunged in that Majesty which at other times I only understood. In this Majesty I was allowed to comprehend a certain truth, which is the accomplishment of all truth. I know not how to relate it, for I saw nothing; but these words were said to me, though yet I saw not any one who spoke them: but I knew well it was the same truth:—"That which I do for thee is no small matter, but it is one of those things for which thou owest Me much; because all the evil which happens to the world proceeds from not clearly knowing the truths of Scripture: one tittle thereof shall not fail." As regards myself, I thought that I had always believed this, and that all the faithful likewise believed it. He then said to me again, "Ah, daughter! how few truly love Me! If they did, I would not conceal my secrets from them. Dost thou know what it is to love Me according to truth? It is to know that all is a lie which is not pleasing to Me. Thou shalt see this clearly, which now thou dost not understand, by the profit which thy soul shall obtain." And so it has been done, our Lord be praised: for from that time everything which is not referred to the service of God does seem to me to be so great a vanity and a lie, that I am in no way able to express it as

I understand it: neither can I express the pity I feel to see men live in such great darkness respecting this truth. By these words I was benefited in many ways, of which I will here relate some, for many others I cannot. Our Lord spoke a particular word to me of the greatest favor. I know not how this was, for I saw nothing; but I remained afterwards (in a manner which I cannot explain) with exceeding great fortitude, and a firm resolution of accomplishing even the least article of the divine Scripture with all my power. And nothing, it seems to me, could present itself to me through which I would not pass for this purpose.

There also remained a truth of this divine truth, which was here represented to me, though without my knowing how or what, and so deeply engraven in my heart that it inspires me with a new kind of reverence for God, because it imparts such a knowledge of His majesty and power, and this in such a manner as cannot be expressed. I can only understand it is a wonderful thing. I had also a very great desire only to speak of things that were really true, and which are above whatever is spoken of here in this world, and so I began to find it painful to live in it. This vision left me with great tenderness, delight, and humility; and I had no suspicion whatever that it was a delusion. I saw nothing, but yet I understood the great benefit there is in not making account of anything which does not bring us nearer to God: I also understood how important it is for souls to walk in the truth, in presence of this same truth, for our Lord gave me to understand that He is the very Truth itself.

All that I have mentioned here I sometimes understood by their being spoken to me, and at other times without my being spoken to; but yet these I understood more clearly than those others which were imparted to me by words. I learnt very high truths respecting this Truth, and better than many learned men could have taught me. It seems to me, that in no way could they have imprinted them on my mind, nor so clearly have made me understand the vanity of this world. This Truth of which I speak is the Truth in itself, and is without beginning or end; and all other truths depend upon this Truth, and all other loves on this Love,

and all other greatness upon this Greatness; though what I say is said so dimly, in comparison with that clearness with which our Lord was pleased to make me understand it. And how does the power of His Majesty appear, in giving so great a gain in so short a time, and other such things as are imprinted on the soul! O greatness and majesty of my God! What wonders dost Thou not do, my all-powerful God! Consider who it is to whom Thou showest such high favors. Dost Thou not remember how this soul has been a very abyss of lies—an ocean of vanities? And all this was through my own fault; for though Thou didst give me an inclination which naturally abhorred lying, yet I was apt in many things to act in a deceitful way. How can this be endured, O my God! And how can such goodness and love on Thy part be shown to one who has so ill deserved them?

As I was once reciting the hours of the Divine Office, with all the rest of the nuns, my soul immediately began to be recollected; and there seemed to be something like a clear looking-glass, without having anything either on the back, or on the sides, or above, or below, which was not all exceeding clear. In the very centre of this Christ our Lord was represented to me, just as I am accustomed to see Him. It seemed as if I saw Him clearly in all the parts of my soul, as in a looking-glass; and this glass was engraven all over (though I know not how), and our Lord Himself was represented in such a very enamored way that I cannot express it. I know this vision has been of great benefit to me, every time I remember it, especially after receiving the most Blessed Sacrament. Hereby I was given to understand, that when a soul is in mortal sin, it is like covering this glass with a great cloud, and making it become very dark; so that though our Lord be ever present with us, thereby giving us our very being, yet then He is not so represented or seen in us; and that when any persons become heretics, then the looking-glass is, as it were, broken, which is far worse than to be obscured. But there is a great difference between my seeing this and relating it, for it is difficult to make it understood. But the vision has done much good, and has filled me with great grief for those times wherein I

myself obscured my soul, so as not to be able to behold my Lord.

This vision seems very useful to persons of recollection, to teach them a way of thinking of our Lord as if in the most interior part of their soul : and this is a consideration which keeps the closest to them, and is much more beneficial than if He were considered as out of the soul, according to what I have said elsewhere : it is also contained in some books written on prayer, by which we are to seek God. The glorious St. Austin especially speaks of it, for he tells us, that neither in the streets, nor in pleasures, nor in public places, where he sought God, did he find Him so well as in himself ; and this is evidently the best way. And there is no need for us to go to heaven, nor any further off than ourselves, for this would only weary and distract the soul, and not do us near so much good.

I wish to mention one circumstance here, if any one has such a thing, and it happens in a great rapture. When the time is past wherein the soul remains in union, so that her faculties are wholly absorbed (and this lasts, as I have said, but a short time), the soul remains still recollected, and is not able, as to the exterior, to return to herself. But those two faculties, the memory and the understanding, remain in a kind of phrenzy, and quite foolish. This, I say, happens sometimes, especially in the beginnings. I have been thinking whether it may not proceed from this, that our natural weakness cannot bear such strength of spirit, by which the imagination is much weakened : I know this happens to some. Now, in such cases, I think it would be good to force themselves to leave off their prayers for that time, and recover afterwards what they lose then, so that all come not together, for it might be an occasion of much harm. I have experience of this, and also how secure a thing it is to consider how much our health can bear.

In all things there will be need of experience and a master, for when once a soul has come so far, many things will occur which will require us to have some one to consult ; and if any such cannot be found, when sought for, our Lord will not be wanting to them, since He would not be wanting to me, though I am such a wicked creature, for I believe there

are few who have attained to the experience of so many things ; and if there be *not* experience, it is in vain to prescribe any remedy which will not rather serve to afflict and disquiet the soul. But our Lord will take even this also for a payment, and therefore it will be the best to consult some one on the subject (as I have mentioned before, and also on all those things of which I am now speaking) ; this I see is of great importance, especially if there be women, to consult with their confessor. There are many more women than men to whom our Lord imparts these favors ; this I heard from that holy man, Peter of Alcantara (and I have seen it also myself), that they profited more in this way than men do. He gave excellent reasons for his opinion, which need not be mentioned here : all were in favor of women.

Another time, when I was in prayer, there was suddenly represented to me, with very great clearness, though without my seeing anything formed, how all things are seen in God, and how He holds them all in Himself. I know not how to describe this, but it remained deeply imprinted on my soul ; and it is one of the great favors which our Lord has shown me, and one of those too which has put me to the greatest shame and confusion, when I considered the sins I had committed against Him. I believe that if our Lord had been pleased to let me see this vision at some other time, or if they could see it who offend Him, they would never dare to act as they do. I say, it appeared to me so, but in such a way, that I cannot affirm I saw anything ; something, however, must have been seen by me, since I am able to make this comparison ; but this was in so subtle and delicate a way, that the understanding is not able to reach it, or else, that I have no experience in those visions, which do not seem to be imaginary : in some of these there may be something of the imaginary ; only, as the powers of the soul are then in a rapture, they are not able afterwards to describe, how our Lord represents Himself to them therein, and how He is pleased that they should enjoy Him. Let us suppose the Divinity to be like some very bright diamond, much larger than the whole universe ; or else, like some looking-glass, after the manner that I spoke before of the soul in that other vision [except that this is in so sublime a manner that I cannot

express it), and that whatever we do is seen in this diamond; for it is so great as to comprise all things within it, and nothing is able to escape from that greatness. It was a very amazing sight to see, in so very short a time, so many things all united together in this bright diamond; but it was also a subject of extreme grief to me, and it is so every time I remember it, to see that monsters so ugly and foul as my sins were, should be represented with such great clearness of light. The truth is, that whenever I remember it, I know not how to endure it; and, at that time, I was so much confounded and ashamed, that it seemed I could not tell where to hide my head. Oh! that some one could make this truth well understood by those who commit filthy sins, that so they might remember those sins are not hidden, and that God has reason to be very sensible of those wrongs, since they are so truly committed in the presence of His Majesty, and that we behave ourselves with such base irreverence before Him. I saw also how justly hell is deserved by one mortal sin, because we cannot understand what a most heinous thing it is to commit any such crime in the presence of so great a Majesty; and what a difference there is between what He is, and what our sins are. His mercy, likewise, appears hereby so much the more, since, notwithstanding we know all this, He still bears with us. It also made me consider, that if such a vision as this can leave the soul so extremely astonished and confounded, what will the day of judgment be, when this Majesty will show itself clearly to us, and when we shall see the offences we have committed. O my God! what blindness is this which has seized me! I have often been amazed when I reflect on what I have written; and your Reverence may wonder how I am able to live when I see these things, and consider myself. May He be eternally blessed, who has borne with me so long!

Being once in prayer, in very great recollection, with much sweetness and quiet, I thought I was entirely surrounded with angels, and was very near to God. I began to beseech His Majesty for the welfare of the Church, and I was given to understand the great good a certain Order*

* The Saint evidently alludes to the Society of Jesus.

would do in the world, in these latter times, and the great courage with which the members thereof would uphold the faith. Being once in prayer, near the most Blessed Sacrament, a certain saint appeared to me, whose Order was in some decay. He had a great book in his hand, which he opened, and bade me read certain words in it, which were very large and legible; they were these: "In future times this Order shall flourish, and have many martyrs."

Another time, being at matins in the choir, six or seven persons were represented to me, who appeared to be of the same Order, with swords in their hands. I thought, that by this I was given to understand they were to defend the faith; for, being in prayer, at another time, I was rapt in spirit, and I seemed to be in a very spacious field, where many were fighting, and they who belonged to this Order fought with great courage. Their faces were beautiful, and very inflamed; and they threw multitudes down upon the ground, quite beaten, and others they killed: this battle seemed to be carried on against heretics. I have seen this glorious saint many times, and he has told me some things, and has given me thanks for the prayers I offered up for his Order, and he promised to recommend me to our Lord. I do not specify the different Orders here, lest others might take offence at it, though, if our Lord please to have them known, he may mention them. But every Order, or every member thereof, should endeavor, that by this means our Lord may make his Order so happy, that as the Church is now in such great trouble, they may be able to serve it. Happy are the lives which are spent in such a cause.

A certain person once desired me to pray to God, that he might understand whether it would be for His glory if he accepted a bishopric? I did so; and, after I had received the Holy Communion, our Lord gave me this answer: "When he shall understand, with all truth and clearness, that true dominion consists in possessing nothing, then he may accept it." These words give us to understand, that whoever is to be a bishop, must be far from desiring or seeking such a dignity, or, at least, he must not seek to procure it. These favors, and many others also, have been, and are still, very often shown to this poor sinner; which, I think, it is not

necessary to relate, since, by those which I have already mentioned, my soul may be known, and the spirit our Lord has given me may be understood. May He be blessed forever, who has taken such great care of me! He told me once, to comfort me, "that I should not afflict myself (and this he spoke with the most tender love), for that in this life we could not possibly be always in the same state, but that sometimes I should be fervent, and sometimes not; sometimes I should have trouble and temptations, and at other times quietness and peace; but that I must always trust in Him, and fear nothing."

I was one day thinking, whether it was not an attachment to creatures, to take pleasure in being with those persons to whom I mentioned the affairs of my soul, and to love them; and with others also, who I find are such great servants of God, that I comforted myself with them, our Lord said to me: "That if a sick man who is in danger of death, thinks a physician has restored him to health, it would not be a virtue to neglect to thank him, and to love him; and what should I have done, had it not been for such as they? That the conversation of the good never did any harm, but that my words must ever be well weighed and holy, and therefore I should not omit treating with them, for it would prove rather beneficial than hurtful." These words comforted me much; for, sometimes as I seemed to be too addicted to creatures, I desired to give up entirely all converse with them. Our Lord always gave me advice in everything, so far as to tell me how I should act towards the weak, and some others also; and He never forgets to take care of me. But sometimes I am troubled to see how little I can do in His service, and also to see that I am forced to spend more time than I would, upon so weak and sinful a body as mine is.

I was once in prayer, and when the time for retiring to rest had come, I found myself in great pain, and expected to have my usual fit of vomiting. Observing myself, therefore, so tied up, while the soul, on the other hand, desired to have some time for herself, I began to be greatly afflicted, and to weep much. And this has happened, not only once, but, as I mention, very often; and it caused such an indignation against myself, that I heartily abhor myself at the

time, though it is true I do not abhor myself as I ought ; nor yet am I wanting in what I see is necessary for me ; and God grant that I may not take more care of myself than I should, for so I fear I do. While I was in this affliction, our Lord appeared to me, and told me, "that I must go through these things, and endure all for the love of Him, for my life was necessary yet." And so, methinks, I never see myself now in any great pain which I care about, since I have resolved to serve this Lord and Comforter of mine with all my power ; for, though He has permitted me to suffer a little, yet He has comforted me in such a manner, that I do not consider myself to do much in desiring afflictions ; and thus there seems no reason why I should live, except only to suffer : this is what I beg with most affection from God. Sometimes I say to Him, with my whole heart : "O Lord ! either to die or to suffer. I beg nothing else of Thee for myself. It comforts me to hear the clock strike, for then I think I draw a little nearer to my seeing God, since one hour more of my life is past.

At other times, I find myself in such a way, that I neither relish my life, nor yet, methinks, desire death ; but I remain with a kind of tepidity and darkness in all things, for (as I have said) I have often great troubles. And since our Lord was pleased that these favors should be publicly known, which His Majesty has bestowed upon me (as He himself some years ago told me they should be, which greatly afflicted me ; for every one understands them as he likes), I comfort myself that it has not been my fault ; because I never spoke of any such thing, except either to my confessors, or those others, who, as I knew by them, had been informed thereof ; for of this I was very cautious, even to extremity, not so much out of humility, as on account of the difficulty that I had to speak even to my confessors about these matters. Now, glory be to God, though there may be some who blame me much, and with good intentions ; and others who are afraid to speak to me, or even hear my confessions ; and others who say many things about me ; yet, since I understand that our Lord has been pleased, by this means, to bring many souls to His service (as I have seen very clearly, and I remember how much He himself would endure for

gaining one soul), I am very little troubled about it. I am not sure whether this may not be, because His Majesty has put me in this little corner, where I am in such strict enclosure, and where I hoped there would be no more remembrance of me than if I had been dead. But people's forgetfulness is not so great as I wished; and since then I have been sometimes obliged to speak with persons. But as I am not now where I can be seen, it seems our Lord has been pleased to drive me to a port, which, I trust in His Majesty, will be a secure one. And since I am now out of the world, and in the company of a few and holy persons, I look down upon things, as if from a mountain, and I care very little about what people say or think of me. I should feel more, if any one soul should have profited (though ever so little) in God's service by my means, than I shall ever do at all that can be said of me; for now, since I have been here, our Lord has been pleased that all my desires should terminate in this (the salvation of souls). He has given me a kind of sleep in this life, which makes it seem to me, that what I see here is a dream; nor am I able to say, that I perceive in myself either much pleasure or trouble from the things of this world. If sometimes I feel any pleasure, it passes away with such speed that I am astonished; and it leaves no other impression than a dream does. It is quite true, that although I should afterwards have a mind, either to rejoice at any pleasure, or to be sorry at any affliction, it is not in my power to do so; just as a sensible person would not be glad or sorry about what he had dreamed; for now our Lord has been pleased to awaken me, and free my soul from all that which before made me to have such feelings, because then I was not truly mortified, nor dead to the things of this world. May His Majesty grant that I may become blind no more.

In this way, my Reverend Father, do I live now; and I trust your Reverence will beg of God, that He will either take me to Himself, or give me means to serve Him. May His Majesty grant, that what I have written here may be of some advantage to your Reverence! I have not written this account without trouble, on account of the little leisure I have had. But happy will this trouble be, if I have said anything to the purpose, and if our Lord shall have received

thereby only one act of praise ; I should then consider my labor fully repaid, even though your Reverence were to burn all I have written immediately. I would not wish, however, this to happen, till those three persons had seen it, whom your Reverence knows, since they are and have been my confessors ; for, if what I have written be bad, it is proper they should lose the good opinion they have of me ; and if what I have said be good, they are holy and learned men, and I know they will perceive whence it comes, and they will praise Him who has spoken by my mouth. May His Majesty always protect your Reverence, and make you so great a saint, that you may with your spirit and zeal enlighten this miserable creature, who has such little humility and so much boldness, in having presumed to write about such high subjects. God grant that I may not have fallen into any error, for my desire and intention were to do my best, and to obey ; and also, that our Lord might receive some praise through my means ; and this is what I have begged of Him these many years. But, since I have had no good works of my own for this purpose, I have presumed to put in order this irregular life of mine, though without bestowing on it any more attention or time than was necessary for writing it. Thus, mentioning those things which have happened to me, I have spoken with all the truth and plainness I was able. Since our Lord is powerful, may He be pleased, (for if He will He can), that in all things I may be able to do His will ; and not allow this soul to be lost, which His Majesty has been pleased, by so many ways and means, and so often, to deliver from hell, and to draw so near to Himself. Amen.

LAUS DEO.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

THE following short historical notice of Sir Tobie Mathews, is taken from the "Catholic Miscellany" for March, 1825. It is more circumstantial than the account given by Dodd. At the end is appended a catalogue of the works this illustrious convert published :—

SIR TOBIE MATHEWS, KNIGHT.

This gentleman, who became equally eminent for his virtues and for his polite acquirements, was the eldest son of Doctor Tobie Mathews, Archbishop of York, and was born at Oxford at the time his father was dean of Christchurch, in 1578.* At the early age of eleven years, he was matriculated a member of that house, and in the following year, namely, in 1590, he obtained a student's place. His talents for oratory and disputation were of the first class, and he permitted no opportunity of improvement to escape him, so that after he had taken his degrees in arts, he was considered an accomplished scholar. "He was one of considerable learning," says A. Wood, "good memory, and sharp wit, mixed with a pleasant affability, and a seeming sweetness of mind." He obtained a seat in parliament when very young, and became so favorite a speaker that his rapid preferment was confidently anticipated. An earnest desire to visit Italy, which he had long indulged, prompted him, in his twenty-seventh year, to request his parents' permission to travel abroad. They were both shocked at his proposal, for they loved him tenderly, and could not endure the thought of

* See Dodd, vol. iii., folio ed.

being long separated from him; they also feared that his intercourse with Roman Catholics might induce him to change his religion. Perceiving the strong opposition which would be raised to his plan, he appeared to submit to the wishes of his parents, and only solicited their consent that he might spend six months in France, until the parliament, of which he was a member, should assemble: they reluctantly complied with his request, but with the special condition that he should visit neither Spain nor Italy. He readily gave his promise that he would not,—although at the time he had no intention of keeping it, if he could but once set his foot on the continent: in after-life he deeply regretted this deliberate falsehood. Having thus obtained the consent of his parents, he hurried off to France; and, determined to indulge his inclination, he continued his route without intermission until he arrived at Florence. After an absence of about six months, his father discovered that he was in this town, and wrote to him, but in terms of great affection, requesting him to return to his own country after he should have taken a reasonable time to gratify his curiosity, and conjuring him, above all things, to remain firm in the Protestant religion. Mr. Mathews felt great pleasure on the perusal of his father's letter, for he now considered that he had his tacit consent to prosecute his travels, and as he had no thoughts about changing his religion, the latter part of the letter gave him no uneasiness. An incident of no seeming importance brought the first serious thought to his mind. Happening one day to take a walk into the country with Sir George Petre and Mr. Robert Cansfield, two Catholic gentlemen, they entered a poor little church on the road-side,—*they* to offer up a short prayer before the blessed sacrament, and *he* to satisfy his curiosity. In a small and dark chapel behind the altar, they chanced to discover a countryman bathed in tears and in fervent prayer. One of the gentlemen, turning to Mr. Mathews, said with a smile, "That a man might have walked long enough in England among the Protestants, especially in retired country churches and on a working day in the afternoon, before he could find a poor countryman so heartily praying with so many tears." As he well knew that there was much truth in this observation, he felt hurt, and made the best

answer he could, but this circumstance made a deep impression upon him. Not long after, Mr. Partridge, an English Protestant, who had just returned from Naples, gave him an account of the liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood, and stated that he himself had been an eye-witness of the fact: the same thing he heard from other gentlemen, who attributed so extraordinary a circumstance to the power of the devil. Mr. Mathews was perplexed, and knew not what opinion to form of the matter. About this time he removed to Sienna, that he might avoid the company of the English, whose conversation he thought was an obstacle to his perfecting himself in the Italian language. He afterwards visited Naples himself, and having satisfied his curiosity, went to Rome, with an intention of residing there for some time. Upon his arrival in this city, he waited upon Father Parsons, as he had a desire to see one of whom he had heard so much; besides, he thought it prudent to be upon terms with a man who had been represented to him in England as an intriguing, bad character, lest he might otherwise do him some serious injury. The politeness with which he was received surprised him, and he was induced to call upon him a second time: an observation which the good father casually made, concerning the pains and trouble that men take for this world, and how little they do for the next, struck him, and he could not help reflecting upon it. He paid also, from motives of prudence, a visit to Cardinal Pinelli, the grand inquisitor, who received him with much kindness. The reception he met with made him frequently reflect how differently he had been treated by these great men, to what a Roman Catholic foreigner would have been in England, even by a country justice of the peace. Amusement, however, and examining the curiosities with which Rome abounded, engrossed the whole of his time, and a serious thought upon the affair of his salvation seldom or never crossed his mind, until a short time before his return to Florence. When at the request of Father Parsons, with whom he was upon very friendly terms, he read Renolds's "Reprehension" of Dr. Whitaker; this brought on several conversations concerning religion, and Father Parsons soon convinced him that he had formed very erroneous ideas upon

that subject. The doctrine of purgatory did not in the least accord with his system of belief; nevertheless, the father brought so many proofs from the works of St. Augustine in favor of this doctrine, that he was obliged to yield, and consequently became in his belief neither Catholic nor Protestant. In this state of mind he returned to Florence, and again gave himself up to amusement, and to the study of the Italian language. When Lent arrived, however, he took a pleasure in hearing sermons; some of which made so deep an impression upon him, that he began to think seriously with himself upon the affair of religion, and to examine into the works of the fathers, St. Augustine, &c. His conversion followed; but before he could prevail upon himself to embrace the Catholic faith, he had to overcome many violent temptations, and to set at defiance what appeared to be at first view insurmountable obstacles. The grace of God, however, at length prevailed, and he applied to Father Lelio Ptolomes, an Italian Jesuit, as he had been more particularly affected by the sermons of this father. Some little time was necessary to complete his instruction, after which he was received into the church by the inquisitor. He then entered into a spiritual exercise for ten days, and made a general confession of his whole life to Father Ptolomes, who advised him to frequent the Sacraments of penance and communion every week, which he faithfully observed to the end of his life. He had endeavored, even in Italy, to keep the change of his religion from becoming publicly known, and returning to France, he was still more secret upon this point. He, however, knew that in England it would be impossible to prevent the emissaries of Secretary Cecil from making the discovery; therefore upon his return to this country, about six months after his conversion, he first took lodgings near the Tower, and wrote to his old friend Sir Francis Bacon, a letter so worded that it might be with propriety shown to the minister whose displeasure he principally feared. This letter had the effect he desired; Cecil was pleased with it, and promised not to molest him. Mr. Mathews then ventured into public, he changed his lodgings into Fleet-street, and paid a visit to Sir Francis Bacon, to thank him for the kind service he had rendered him with the secretary. After

this he waited upon Dr. Bancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, who received him with some harshness, and appointed a time to see him again, when he would confer with him upon the subject of religion. Mr. Mathews had afterwards several interviews with the archbishop, who giving way at last to passion, when he could not prevail by argument, committed him a close prisoner to the Fleet, where he was confined during six months, and frequently treated with great severity. In prison he was visited by many persons, several of whom were his friends; but the greater number came to dispute with him—among these were some friends of his father, who hoped through their means to induce his son to return to the Protestant faith; among others was Dr. Andrews, Bishop of Chichester. When they discovered that he was immovable in his religious creed, they varied the attack, and pressed him to take the oath of allegiance, which at that time was so worded, that it could not be taken with a safe conscience; but Mr. Mathews was proof against all their sophistry. While he was thus confined, the plague began to rage with great violence, he therefore petitioned to be removed from a prison situated in the very centre of contagion, and offered to find bail to any amount. Nevertheless, his petition was disregarded. At last Sir Francis Bacon, who interested himself by every means in his power to obtain his release from confinement, so far succeeded that he obtained permission for him to visit him at his own house, attended by a proper guard, and after a time his discharge was granted, when he was allowed to remain during two months at the house of a friend, under the care of a messenger, to settle his affairs, and then the king gave him permission to travel abroad. This was understood to be a peremptory command, and he immediately obeyed; twelve years, however, elapsed before leave could be obtained for his return to England, for which leave he was indebted to Mr. Villiers, who was afterwards Duke of Buckingham, with whom he had contracted a friendship in France. He had not long returned to his native land, when the oath was again tendered to him: this obliged him once more to pass over to the continent, where he remained until the following year, when Lord Bristol succeeded in obtaining from the king an order for his uncondi-

tional return in January, 1621. His majesty soon after thought fit to take him into favor, and to send him to Spain to his son the prince, who was in that kingdom upon a chivalrous expedition relating to his projected marriage. Some of Mr. Mathews's letters are extant in print, which he wrote while attending upon his royal highness, and they show that he was a discreet negotiator and prudent counsellor; these may be found in the "Cabala," &c. Upon his return to England, his reception at Court was very flattering: the king, at the request of the prince, treated him with particular kindness, and on the 10th of October, 1623, bestowed upon him the honor of knighthood; and his father, the Archbishop of York, seeing how high he stood at court, ventured to receive him publicly into his favor, and invited him to his palace, where he continued to reside until that prelate's death, which occurred in the year 1628. Sir Tobie never after lost the favor of the court; he was particularly esteemed by Thomas, Earl of Strafford, whom he accompanied to Ireland in 1633, when that nobleman was appointed lord-lieutenant. When the civil wars broke out, Sir Tobie, being far advanced in years, retired from the world, and ended his days among the Jesuits at Ghent, on the 13th of October, 1655. He had previously taken priest's orders, but the time of his ordination is uncertain. For many years of his life he had been an object of attack to the Puritans, who sincerely hated him, and many of their writers abused him without mercy, styling him a crafty politician, spy, &c. He was the author of several works, and many of his letters are to be met with in "Serinia Sacra," and in the "Cabala;" he also collected together a small volume of letters, which was published in 1660, to which his portrait was prefixed.

The titles of his works are the following:

1. A rich Cabinet of Precious Jewels.
2. A Collection of Letters to several Persons. London, 1660.
3. Several Letters in the "Cabala," 1654; also in the "Serinia Sacra." London, 1663.
4. The Benefit of washing the Head with cold Water every Morning.
5. The History of the Times. (Not published.)

6. St. Augustine's Confessions. Translated from the Latin, 1624.

7. The Life of St. Teresa. Translated, 1623.

8. The Penitent Banditto. 1625, 1663.

9. Essays of Sir Francis Bacon. Translated into Italian.

Dodd gives this list, but I cannot be certain of its accuracy; indeed the Rev. Mr. Tierney, in a kind letter lately received from him, proves that Dodd has made two mistakes respecting the dates of the publication of "St. Augustine's Confessions" and the "Life of St. Teresa." The former was printed in 1620, not 1623; and the latter in 1642, at Antwerp, under the title of the "Flaming Hart." (J. Dalton.)

No. II.

THE following notice of Mr. Woodhead is taken from the "Catholic Miscellany," January, 1825.

ABRAHAM WOODHEAD.

This gentleman, who was one of the most able controvertists of his time, was born in the year 1608, at Meltham, in the parish of Abbesbury, or, as it is generally called, Ambury, in Yorkshire. His father was John Woodhead, of Thornhill, in the same county. At the age of sixteen years, he was sent to Oxford, and was admitted into University College. His first tutor was John Rateliff, and after his death he was placed under the care of Thomas Rateliff, both of whom were fellows of the same house. He soon became distinguished in the university as a logician, and as a good philosopher. In 1632, or in the following year, he took his degree of Master of Arts, and was afterwards elected Freestone Scholar, then Walter Skirland's Fellow, and there is reason to suppose that he was also elected Freestone Fellow. The honor of pronouncing the Latin oration, when the west side of the University College was built, was conferred upon him at the time when he was a Walter Skirland's Fellow, and the discourse which he then delivered is still preserved in the college library. When he had finished his course of divinity, and had taken orders according to the rites of the Church of England, he was elected one of the proctors of the university: this occurred in 1641. In the following year, Mr. Woodhead was summoned to answer at the bar of the House of Commons, various charges which were brought against him in consequence of his courage in opposing an overbearing faction, and of his attachment to the privileges of that university, of which he had the honor to be a member; for when the parliament attempted by every means to gain it over to the republican party, and had proposed a convocation in order to introduce the Solemn

League and Covenant, the firmness of Mr. Woodhead prevented in a great measure the innovation; and at the bar he made so able a defence, that he was dismissed without further molestation, and returned to the university, where he remained until the expiration of his proctorship, and then procured the college license to travel with Messrs. Harlackenden and Culpepper, two of his own pupils, upon condition that he should quit the care of these gentlemen, when Mr. Radcliff, the son of Sir George Radcliff, should be sent over to him; and probably this event soon occurred, for by the college register it appears, that on the 22d of June, 1645, he and Mr. Radcliff had both leave of absence for four terms. About this time he began to entertain doubts with regard to the truth of the Protestant faith, and felt some inclination towards the Catholic religion: this was occasioned, as he writes in one of his letters to his intimate friend Dr. Witby, by reading the saints' lives, and the learned and pious works of the great St. Augustine, by way of index. "To read the Fathers," says he, "would be the business of a man's life; but in a quarter of a year, by consulting the heads and indexes of the best Fathers about all controversial points, one may be plentifully satisfied concerning their opinions, and what way the Fathers incline." He examined also and compared Harding and Jewell; a book written by Dean Cressy pleased him in part, although he disliked the strong and severe expressions with which it abounded. The fame of the virtues and extraordinary piety of St. Charles Borromeo, of St. Philip Neri, St. Francis de Sales, of St. Teresa, and other devout servants of God, had also reached Mr. Woodhead, and he had been induced to commence an inquiry into their lives, and into that religion which had taught them such principles of sanctity, and this inquiry had in a great measure dissipated his errors and prejudices. Still, however, in an affair of such consequence, where the eternal salvation of his soul was concerned, he thought it proper to proceed with the utmost caution. Some years therefore elapsed before he declared himself a Catholic. It was about this time, when he began to entertain doubts of the orthodoxy of the Protestant faith, that Mr. Ailsbury, afterwards Sir Thomas

Ailsbury, governor to the Duke of Buckingham, and his brother Lord Francis, prevailed upon him to undertake the instruction of these young nobleman in the mathematics, and other liberal sciences. Mr. Woodhead spent some time on the continent with his noble pupils, and when they returned to England, apartments were provided for him at York-house, and a handsome salary allowed him. But this was of short duration, for at the unhappy defeat at Kingston, which occurred in 1648, Lord Francis was killed, and the duke was in danger of utter ruin. As he knew himself to be particularly obnoxious to the republican party, he concealed himself for a short time, until he was received into the family of Lord Capel, with whom he resided at least until the close of the year 1652. Doctor Fern, who became after the Restoration Bishop of Chester, was during most part of this time chaplain in the same family, and he and Mr. Woodhead were in the constant habit of arguing upon the controverted points in religion: the doctor was a stanch Protestant, while the latter inclined towards the Catholic side; and it is probable that these discussions finally completed his conversion, and induced him to quit Lord Capel, and also to resign a pension of sixty pounds per annum which had been settled upon him for life. He now retired to the house of his friend Dr. Witby, who resided in the city, where he had leisure and opportunity to examine the best Protestant writers upon controversy, of consulting the Fathers and Councils, and of more attentively perusing the Holy Scriptures, and of examining with particular care those passages which Protestants and sectarians generally cite in support of their various innovations and novelties. After some time, being desirous of secluding himself as much as possible from the world, and of giving himself up entirely to controversial reading, he united with a few select friends in the purchase of a house and garden at Hoxton, where they lived in common, uniting into one fund the wreck of their property which had escaped the sanetimonious grasp of the Puritanic faction, and devoting themselves to prayer and study until 1660, the period of the Restoration, when the king's commissioners deputed to restore the banished mem-

bers of the university to their respective posts, called Mr. Woodhead from his solitude to reinstate him in his fellowship. "He accepted of it again rather as a mark of justice due to the cause for which he was deprived of it, than as a design to retain it as a Protestant, *and never communicated with the Church of England, then or afterwards.* He remained in the college for a short time; but finding residence there inconsistent with his religious principles, which now were so well known, that not long after one of the beadles accused him of Popery to the vice-chancellor, he laid hold of the occasion, and without any contestation generously chose to retire to his dear solitude at Hoxton."—"Here he employed his time in praying, meditating, and writing in defence of his faith, and for the good of his neighbor, with some small exercise to enable him to return to his labors with greater alacrity. As to the interior perfections of his soul, and what passed in the pious moments of his retirement, it is only known to the Searcher of hearts, for whom, and to whom his life and labors were chiefly dedicated; with only some select and pious associates joining in the same views, and assisting him in his labors, that is, helping him to find places in authors, collate his citations, or transcribe his learned works and the like. For it was here, and that, too, without any other assistance but what was just now mentioned, this learned champion of the Church wrote those elaborate treatises of controversy, particularly that of 'Ancient Church Government,' in five parts; 'The Rational Account of the Doctrine of Catholics, concerning an Ecclesiastical Guide in Controversy,'—having in view two of the most learned writers of the Protestant side, Archbishop Laud and Dr. Stillingfleet."—"In this retirement he perfected those lasting monuments of his pious soul; that is, his works of devotion, chiefly wrote in his latter days, in which we see, notwithstanding his humility, how much his soul was elevated towards God. This appears almost through every page of that excellent treatise of the 'Motives to Holy Living,' by way of heads for meditation, through which the spirit of the Gospel and the most Christian virtues shine in the most delightful colors; as also in his tract of 'Catholic Devotions

Vindicated;' and in two large prefaces of his composing, before 'St. Teresa's Life;' and in one to his translation of 'Gregory Lopez's Life.' The same spirit shows itself in 'The Life of Christ: that of the Benefits of our Saviour.' "

" But to return to the last scene of this holy man's life ; though his thoughts in this retirement were chiefly taken up in the choice of the better part, still preparing and purifying his soul the nigher he approached his end ; nevertheless, as a prudent economy and management is a moral virtue, he so discreetly ordered his temporal concerns, and the little stock God had blessed him with, as not only to secure a moderate maintenance, agreeable to his choice, but something also to be disposed of at his death, to such uses as he thought most proper ; leaving good part of what he had to the maintenance of a school in the country ; believing that learning and a careful education were proper steps to attain the best religion, since it was his own learning, next to God's grace, that brought him to the knowledge of the true church, of which he died an humble and holy member, as well as a very great sufferer for it." The praiseworthy intentions, and charitable bequests of Mr. Woodhead, were however frustrated by the storm which was raised against the whole body of English Catholics, in consequence of "Oates's Plot," and had he lived but a very short time longer, it is probable that his name also would have occurred in the list of victims of persecution and perjury, which blots the annals of Charles the Second's reign. "However, the providence of God thought proper to take his faithful servant to himself, just before these dismal times happened. He had run through a great many trials before ; he had been prepared for the kingdom of heaven by many tribulations ; he had employed the talents entrusted to him by his Divine Master to the best advantage, having spent the chief part of his time from his youth in improving himself in what he thought might be for the good of his neighbor. And though the stream ran in a wrong channel at first, he soon rectified its course, and made amends for it, to the best of his power afterwards. We don't find he ever took any orders in the Catholic Church.

though he had in the Church of England, but behaved as a layman after his conversion. However, it is supposed he thought celibacy to be the properest state for persons in holy orders, not only as approaching nigher that of Christ his Master, but as a state less distracted with family cares, and worldly solicitude, allowing more leisure for the great duties of their calling. But by all accounts of him, he lived with an unblemished character, with respect to his morals and chastity; all sides agree in his character as a Christian. He was now drawing towards the end of his career, and preparing his soul in a greater degree of sanctification and resignation to the will of his Creator, when that dreadful storm of persecution against the professors of his religion was just going to rise; but the goodness of God snatched him from it, to place him in the tabernacles of the just; and being seized with a fever, which proved his last, he rendered his pious soul to God in a good old age, May 4th, 1678, aged 70."—"He was privately interred in the church-yard of St. Pancras, near London, under an ordinary monument raised altar-wise, built a little height with bricks, and covered with a slab of blue marble, on which was this humble inscription: *'Elegi abjectus esse in domo Domini, & mansi in solitudine, non quærens quod mihi utile, sed quod multis.'*"

"Afterwards, in the year 1732, the grave was opened, and after digging about a foot from the surface of the earth, a small but firm cemented arch was found, just sufficient to encompass the coffin, which being quite laid open, the coffin was found to be decayed, and the bones, bare of flesh, were carefully gathered together, and preserved decently till a new coffin was brought, wherein they were deposited; and a handsome marble monument was erected to his memory, and to that of a young lady of great merit." This lady was "the first and most beloved wife of Cuthbert Constable, of Burton, Esq., Amatia, or Amey, daughter of Lord Clifford; she died 25th July, 1731, ætat. 26. Her widower caused her to be buried by Mr. Woodhead, and erected this new monument jointly for her and also for that pious great man, with the following epitaph:

Hic jacet
 Qui elegit abjectus esse in domo Dei,
 Et mansit in solitudine,
 Non quærens quod sibi esset utile, sed quod multis,
 Abraham Woodhead ;
 Maximum Collegii Universitatis Oxonii, ut &
 totius sæculi ornamentum ;
 Vivumque virtutem omnium exemplar.
 Vir
 Versus Deum ardentissimâ pietate,
 Versus Ecclesiam Catholicam humilissimo obsequio,
 Studiorum indefessâ assiduitate mirabilis,
 Honoribus, divitiis, sæculiq ; voluptatibus omnibus
 Vitam humilem, obscuram & laboriosam prætulit :
 Neque Libris
 Quos per-multos & utilissimos & piissimos doctissimosque
 edidit,
 Nomen suum inscribi passus est.
 Obiit ferè septuagenarius Maii 4to,
 Anno Dom. 1678.
 P. V.
 Cuthbertus Constable, &c.

“ On the same monument which covers both bodies, on the opposite side to this epitaph of Mr. Woodhead, is inscribed on a like slab of fine white marble, an epitaph of like length in memory of Mrs. Amey Constable, daughter of Hugh Lord Clifford, of Chudleigh, in which is drawn an admirable portraiture of her most amiable virtues.

“ Cuthbert Constable, Esq., died 25th March, 1757, and was buried at Burton, near Hull, in Holderness.”

We are aware that many of the circumstances related in this sketch of Mr. Woodhead's life, do not accord with what Mr. Wood has written in his “Ath. Oxon. ;” but we have preferred the authority of Mr. Simon Berington, who wrote his life at the request of Mr. Constable, and who has always given his reasons when he has dissented from Mr. Wood ; we have had also the advantage of consulting some notes written by the late esteemed, learned, and accurate Reverend Alban Butler. In our next number, we intend to give

some account of the numerous works composed by the indefatigable and pious subject of this memoir.

The writings of Mr. Woodhead are so numerous, and contain such a fund of erudition, of solid piety, and of sound argument, that they form a complete devotional and controversial library, and have not only been highly commended by many succeeding Catholic authors, but several learned Protestant writers have borne testimony to their merit.—“His works,” says A. Wood, the Protestant Oxford historian, “show him to have been a person of sound and solid judgment; well read in the Fathers, and in the polemical writings of the most eminent and renowned defenders of the Church of England.” The celebrated antiquary Hearne writes in one of his letters: “I always looked upon Mr. Abraham Woodhead to be one of the greatest men that ever this nation produced.” And one of his antagonists, Dr. Witby, allows, in his “Preface to his Appendix of Idolatry and Host-worship,” that “the author of the ‘Guide to Controversy’ is a person most highly famed among the Roman Catholics; and he is the most ingenious and solid writer of the Roman party.” These gentlemen were all Protestants. It will be unnecessary to quote more than one Catholic writer. Mr. Simon Berington, in his brief account of the writings and life of the author of “Ancient Church Government,” &c., has this passage: “But what is particularly to be admired in Mr. Woodhead is, that in all his disputes with his learned adversaries, one may say, the most learned the Church of England ever had, he never exceeds the bounds of modesty and fair language; never using any personal, or even party reflections; free from passion or invidious zeal, he calmly, but with the more solidity, shows the weakness of his adversaries’ cause, the strength of his own, and leads them insensibly to the truth, by a certain force of reasoning peculiar to himself.” He however admits, that “his method and style is wholly peculiar to himself; and indeed so very uncommon, that if there can be any objection against them, that is the chiefest; nothing can be objected against his learning or judgment, and very few come up to it; his intermixing so many paratheses and parentheses, runs through all his

works, and sometimes hinders the sense from being carried on so smoothly as it might be otherwise, but makes fully amends by the solidity of his judgment, and vast stock of learning; he almost crowds in his paragraphs. This is another peculiar mark of his writings, so that sometimes, by an over-cautiousness, endeavoring to express his sentiments more fully, and to leave nothing without reflection, he is a little hard to be understood in some places. It is also customary with him to refer the reader to what he had wrote in some former treatises." With these acknowledged peculiarities, his works were nevertheless greatly esteemed by the late learned and pious author of "The Saints' Lives," who possessed many of his manuscripts. The following catalogue of Mr. Woodhead's writings, which we trust will prove more correct than any hitherto published, has been formed in a great measure from the manuscript notes of Mr. Cuthbert Constable; like him, we have not attended to the exact chronology of dates, but have in this respect followed Mr. S. Berington.

While he resided at the university, he composed a book of logic, another of philosophy, and one of the form and use of a common place-book, besides some other tracts; none of these were ever printed, and the manuscripts are lost.

When he was tutor to the Duke of Buckingham and his brother, he wrote a paraphrase on St. Paul's Epistles, to the end of the Hebrews, in 222 pages, octavo, printed at Oxford, 1675; it was afterwards, in 1702, reprinted by Dr. Fell, at London, in octavo, in 419 pages, and was perfectly conformable to the MS. as far as it went.

During the time he was with Lord Capel, he published his "Instructions for Oratory," and a small tract "Of Perspective Glasses."

After he had retired to Hoxton, the following numerous list was the work of his indefatigable pen:—

"An Historical Narration of the Life and Death of Christ," in two parts, printed at the Theatre, Oxford, 1685; many exceptions were made in the university against this book, particularly by Doctor George Reynall, of Caius College.

"The Benefits of our Saviour." Quarto, Oxford, 1680, pp. 237.

“Ancient Church Government,” in five parts: the first part is entitled, “A Brief Account of Ancient Church Government, with Reflections on the several modern Writings of the Presbyterians;” it is also called the “First Treatise of the first Part of Ancient Church Government;” it contains, first, the succession of the apostles to our Lord in his pastoral office, and the primacy of St. Peter; secondly, the succession of bishops to the apostles, their authority, and the presbyters’ subordination to them; thirdly, the presbyterian plea against bishops; and fourthly, the answer to this plea; in one vol. quarto, London, 1685, pp. 267.

The second and third treatise of the third part of “Ancient Church Government,” consisting of 287 pages: the second treatise treats of the indeficiency of the clergy, and of the Evangelical doctrine delivered to them by the Lord; in 99 pages, quarto. In the third treatise is contained the subordination of bishops, their several jurisdictions, and the primary and supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome, reflecting on the writings of several learned Protestants—Bishop Bramhill, Doctor Field, Doctor Fern, Doctor Hammond, and others. These two treatises are commonly bound together, making 287 pages quarto, printed at Oxford, 1688. These, with the first treatise, make up all the first part of “Church Government,” in two distinct volumes.

“Church Government,” second part, showing the authority and subordinations of councils composed of united bodies of the clergy; a MS. in quarto, containing, if printed, about 200 pages.

“Ancient Church Government,”* third part, concerning heresy and schism, and who have anciently been accounted such: London, 1736, quarto. This volume is now lying before us, and from the back of the title-page we transcribe the following note, which is in the handwriting of the learned Alban Butler himself:—“Mr. Constable, who died at Burton, his seat, at Holderness, near Hull, 25th of March, 1757, employed in publishing this volume Mr. Simon Berington, who died in 1758; was much dissatisfied with the style and

* This third part contains an accurate account of Mr. Woodhead’s life. (See Dodd also, vol. iii., folio ed.)

inaccuracies of the preface and author's life; and on this account, suppressed and destroyed the whole edition, except three or four copies which were got abroad before they came into his hands. This copy he kept for his own use, and corrected it in the list of the author's writings. Mr. Constable was displeased to find that Mr. Berington endeavored to give Mr. Woodhead the honor of being the author of the 'Whole Duty of Man,' and other works of the same hand, which Mr. Constable could by no means be persuaded of, merely on account of the difference of style, there occurring in the 'Whole Duty of Man,' and the other works of that author, scarce any parentheses, with which all Mr. Woodhead's works abound. Nevertheless certain it is, that Doctor John Fell, dean of Christ Church, afterwards bishop of Oxford, who published the other works of the author of the 'Whole Duty of Man,' namely, the 'Ladies' Calling,' the 'Art of Contentment,' the 'Government of the Tongue,' the 'Lively Oracles given unto us,' &c., in folio, at Oxford in 1675—1678; and wrote the preface, which he prefixes to this edition, and who was the only person then living who knew the true author of the 'Whole Duty of Man,' gave this book in London with the pieces of Mr. Woodhead, and ordered Mr. Woodhead's name to be added to the title of this, as well as of the other works, which he gave to be bound; if Mr. Woodhead wrote that celebrated work, it was before he travelled abroad, or had any thoughts of embracing the Catholic faith."

The fourth part of the "Ancient Church Government," is a MS. in two vols., containing what former Councils have been lawfully general and obliging; and what have been the doctrines of such councils, obliging in relation to reformation. In one of these vols. is to be found considerations upon the Council of Trent.

The fifth part of the "Ancient Church Government," concerning the Reformation, was published at Oxford, 1687, quarto, and was answered by Doctor Smalridge, and also by an anonymous writer.

"A Rational Account of the Doctrines of Catholics," concerning the ecclesiastical guide in controversy of religion, reflecting on the writings of Protestants, particularly Archbishop Laud, and Doctor Stillingfleet, on this subject, by R. H.

The second edition, 1673, quarto, consists of four discourses, to which are commonly added explications concerning the resolution of faith.

“Doctor Stillingfleet’s Principles Considered.” Paris, 1671, a small octavo. Of this piece Dr. Sethward, Bishop of Salisbury, said it contained more reason than all Dr. Stillingfleet’s volumes.

“Of the Holy Eucharist,” in four parts, a thick quarto MS.

“A Compendious Discourse on the Eucharist.” Dr. Adrick wrote a reply to this, which Mr. Woodhead answered in an appendix.

“Two Discourses,” concerning the Black Rubric, and the adoration of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. Ox. 1687, quarto.

“The Apocalypse Paraphrased,” a small quarto, without a title. To which is added an extract from Bish. Montague’s appeal concerning Mahomet.

“Of Images and Idolatry.” Ox. 1689, pp. 82.

“Of Justification,” a MS. in quarto.

“Roman Doctrine of Penance and of Indulgences.” 1672, small octavo; and quarto in 1679.

“Roman Devotions Vindicated.” 1672.

“Luther’s Spirit, or the Original of the Reformation, and of Celibacy.” Ox. 1687. The first part of this was answered by Bish. Atterbury, and the second part by Mr. Tully, of Queen’s Coll., Ox. in 1688.

“Five Discourses of the Necessity of Faith, of Infallibility, of Submission, of Judgment, Trial of Doctrines, Dangers of Schism.” 1688, quarto.

“Of Invocation of Saints,” in four parts, a thick quarto MS.

“Of the State of the Dead,” in two parts, MS.

“Of Sacred Things,” a small quarto, MS.

“Benefits of the Holy Ghost,” MS.

“Of God’s Just Proceedings with Man fallen, and of the actings of His Spirit with Man’s freewill,” MS.

“Catholic Theses,” on several chief heads of controversy, printed only to p. 101, the rest in MS. sufficient to make a thick quarto; what is printed is without name of place or year.

Of "Miracles," MS. This, Mr. Nicholson says, was his last work, a small quarto, in 207 pages.

"Short Confession of Faith," MS.

"St. Augustin's Confession," translated 1679, octavo.

"St. Teresa's Life and Way of Perfection," translated, with a long preface by himself.

"Life of Gregory Lopez," a translation.

"The Life of Mons. De Renty," from the French.

"The Piety of Rome and Paris," thin octavo. This was answered by James Harrington, B.A., of C. C. Coll.; he was afterwards a barrister of the Inner Temple.

"Of Temporal Government;" this has been long since lost.

"A Discourse of the Necessity of Church Guides," for directing Christians in necessary faith, &c., by R. H., 1675.

"The Greeks' Opinion of the Eucharist," misrepresented by Mr. Claude, in his answer to Mr. Arnold, 1686, quarto.

"Institutions of the Congregation of the Oratory, at St. Mary's in Vallocell," by St. Philip Neri. Ox. duodecimo, 1687.

"The Life of St. Philip Neri," founder of the Congregation of the Oratory, translated from the Latin copy of Johannes Baccius, printed in 1656, in octavo. To which are added certain pieces of St. Augustine, vindicating the continuance of miracles. The miracles of Port Royal, &c.

"The Scale of Perfection," London, 1679, and other pious devotions first published in 1494, by Walter Hilton, put into modern English by Mr. Woodhead.

A small tract, "Of Measuring Figures," MS.

"Heads of Meditations," in obscure characters, MS.

A treatise "Concerning Prayer," quarto.

"The Considerations on the Council of Trent," being the fifth discourse concerning the guide to controversies, by R. H., 1671, and again, London, 1687.

Such are the works of Mr. A. Woodhead: works which display such an extraordinary degree of profound learning, of patient investigation, and of unaffected piety, with such cool and dispassionate argument, that they justly stand pre-eminent among the polemical writers of the seventeenth century.

No. III.

CANONIZATIO SANCTÆ THERESLÆ VIRGINIS,

*Tam Fratrum, quam Monialium Carmelitarum
Discalceatorum Fundatricis.*

GREGORIUS EPISCOPUS,

Servus Servorum Dei.

AD PERPETUAM REI MEMORIAM.

Omnipotens Sermo Dei, cùm de sinu Patris ad hæc inferiora descendisset, ut erueret nos de potestate tenebrarum, completo dispensationis tempore, transiturus de hoc mundo ad Patrem, ad propagandam per totam terrarum orbem electorum suorum Ecclesiam, quam sanguine suo acquisiverat, eamque verbo vitæ erudiendam, ad confundendam sapientiam sapientium, et destruendam omnem altitudinem, quæ adversus Deum extollebatur, non multos nobiles elegit, nec multos sapientes, sed contemptibiles mundi; qui non in sublimitate sermonis, nec in humanæ sapientiæ verbo, sed in simplicitate et veritate ministerium suum, ad quod à diebus æternitatis prædestinati erant, adimplerent.

1. In sequentibus verò generationibus, cùm juxta præordinata tempora, plebem suam per servos suos fideles visitare dignatus est, plerumque parvulos et humiles assumpsit, per quos Catholicæ Ecclesiæ ingentia præstaret beneficia; quibus ipse, juxta verbum suum, abscondita à sapientibus et prudentibus regni cœlestis mysteria revelaret, cosque superiorum charismatum donis adeò illustraret, ut omnium virtutum ac bonorum operum exemplis Ecclesiam foverent, ac signorum gloriâ clarificarent; in diebus verò nostris fecit salutem magnam in manu feminae; suscitavit enim in Ecclesiâ suâ, veluti novam Debboram, Theresiam Virginem; quæ post-

quam mirabili victoriâ carnem suam perpetuâ virginitate, mundum admirabili humilitate, et cunctas adinventiones diaboli multis maximisque virtutibus superasset, excelsiora moliens, et virtutem sexus animi magnitudine supergressa, accinxit fortitudine lumbos suos, et roboravit brachium suum, et instruxit exercitus fortium; qui pro domo Dei Sabaoth, et pro lege ejus, et pro mandatis ejus armis spiritualibus decertarent, quam Dominus ad tantum opus peragendum abundanter implevit spiritu sapientiæ et intellectus, et thesauris gratiæ suæ adeò illustravit, ut splendor ejus, tanquam stella in firmamento, fulgeat in domo Dei in perpetuas æternitates.

2. Dignum igitur et congruum existimavimus, ut quam Deus et Unigenitus Filius ejus Dominus noster Jesus Christus, quasi sponsam ornatam coronâ, et decoratam monilibus suis, in gloriâ miraculorum plebi suæ manifestare dignatus est, Nos quoque pro pastoralis sollicitudine nostrâ in Universali Ecclesiâ, cui, licet meritis minime suffragantibus, præsidemus; tanquam sanctam et electam Dei colendam et venerandam, Apostolicâ auctoritate decreverimus, ut omnes populi confiteantur Domino in omnibus mirabilibus ejus, et cognoscat omnis caro quoniam non defecerunt in diebus nostris miserationes ejus; qui, quamvis peccatis nostris existentibus, visitet nos in virgâ indignationis suæ, non tamen continet in irâ suâ misericordias suas; dum in afflictionibus nostris novis nos præditiis munit, et amicos suos multiplicat, qui Ecclesiam suam meritorum, et intercessionum suffragiis protegant ac defendant.

3. Atque, ut universi Christi fideles intelligant, quàm abundè in ancillam suam effuderit Deus de Spiritu suo, ac propterea erga ipsam devotio in dies augeatur, insigniores quasdam ejus virtutes, et aliqua ex magnalibus, quæ in manu ejus operatus est Dominus, his literis duximus inserenda.

Nata est Theresia Abulæ in regno Castellæ, anno Salutis humanæ millesimo quingentesimo quintodecimo, parentibus, ut genere præclaris, ita etiam vitæ integritate conspicuis; à quibus in timore Domini educata, admirandum futuræ sanctitatis in tenerimâ adhuc ætate specimen dedit; nam cùm Martyrum Acta perlegeret, adeò Sancti Spiritus igne cor ejus intra eam concaluit, ut cum fratre germano etiam

puero domo aufugeret, ut in Africam trajiceret, ubi sanguinem ac vitam pro testimonio Jesu Christi profunderet. Sed occursu patruī revocata, cū optimam sortem sibi ereptam esse, jugibus lacrymis deploraret, ardens martyrii desiderium eleemosynis, aliisque operibus compensavit.

4. Sed cū ad vigesimum ætatis annum pervenisset, Christo se totam despondit, et vocationem, quā ab eo vocata erat, aggressa, ad moniales Sanctæ Mariæ de Monte Carmelo ordinis Mitigati se contulit, ut plantata in domo Domini, in atriis domus Dei nostri floreret: professione itaque in eo Monasterio emissā, cū per duo et viginti annos gravissimis morbis, ac variis præterea tentationibus vexata esset, nullisque supernis consolationibus reficeretur, adeò invictè, adjuvante Domino, omnia pertulit, ut probatio fidei illius omni pretiosior auro, quod per ignem probatur, inventa fuerit, in laudem, et gloriam, et honorem, in revelationem Jesu Christi.

5. Et quoniam ad erigendum sublime Christianarum virtutum ædificium, fidei fundamentum ponendum fuit, illud adeò stabile ac inconcussum Theresia collocavit, ut juxta verbum Domini, comparanda sit viro sapienti, qui ædificavit domum suam supra petram; eā etenim firmitate Sacrosancta Ecclesiæ Sacramenta, cæteraque Catholicæ religionis dogmata credebat et venerabatur, ut majorem, ut ipsa sæpius testificabatur, de qualibet re certitudinem habere non posset: hæc fidei lucernā illuminata, Domini nostri Jesu Christi corpus in Sacratissimā Eucharistiā mentis oculis adeò clarè intuebatur, ut assereret, nihil esse quod invideret eorum beatitudini, qui corporeis oculis Dominum conspexisset, tantum autem vivæ spei in Domino collocaveret, ut jugiter deploraret quod tandiu in præsentī mortali vitā detineretur, quæ sibi impedimentum afferret, quo minus semper cum Domino esset, nec rarò dum in corde suo cœlestis patriæ gaudia recogitabat, mente excedebat, et ad eorum fruitionem in carne rapiebatur.

6. Sed inter cæteras Theresiæ virtutes, præcipuè emicuit dilectio Dei, quæ adeò in corde ejus exarsit, ut Confessarii ipsius Theresiæ caritatem, tamquam non hominis sed cherubim propriam, admirarentur et celebrarent, quam etiam Dominus noster Jesus Christus multis visionibus ac revela-

tionibus mirabiliter auxit: quandoque enim data dextera, clavoque ostenso, illam in sponsam suam adoptavit, atque his verbis alloqui dignatus est: "Deinceps ut vera sponsa meum zelabis honorem; jam ipse sum totus tuus, et tu tota mea." Aliquando etiam Angelum vidit, ignito jaculo sibi præcordia transverberantem, ex quibus cœlestibus donis divini amoris flamma in ejus corde adeò exæstualat, ut maxime arduum votum à Deo edocta emisit—efficiendi semper quicquid perfectius esse, et ad majorem Dei gloriam pertinere intelligeret. Quin etiam post mortem cuidam Moniali per visum manifestavit, se non vi morbi, sed ex intolerabili divini amoris incendio vitâ excessisse.

7. Sed quàm perpetuâ charitate proximum dilexit, multis argumentis manifestum fuit, sed præsertim ex ardenti desiderio quo animarum salutem desiderabat. Infidelium et Hæreticorum tenebras perpetuis lacrymis deflebat, ac pro eorum illuminatione non solum juges ad Deum preces fundebat, sed et jejunia, flagellationes, ac alias carnis macerationes offerebat. Proposuit enim S. Virgò in corde suo, nullum diem sine caritatis officio transigere: in quo etiam Deus ipsi auxilium præstitit: nunquam enim ei defuit, ipso largiente, exercendæ caritatis occasio.

8. Mirabiliter autem imitata est Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum in delectione inimicorum: nam cùm ingentes paterentur persecutiones et adversitates, diligebat tamen persequentes, et orabat pro his qui oderant se. Quinimo, detrimenta et offensiones quas perpetiebatur, amoris et caritatis ipsi escam ministrabant, adeò ut viri graves dicere solerent; qui amari à Theresiâ vellet, damno aut injuriâ ut eam afficeret, oportere.

9. Vota vero, quæ in professione religionis Deo voverat, maximâ curâ ac diligentia reddidit, nec enim tantummodo omnes exteriores actus Superiorum arbitrio maximâ cum habilitate spiritus perficiebat: sed firmiter etiam in corde suo constituit, eorum voluntati omnes etiam cogitationes suas subicere. Cujus etiam rei egregia exempla reliquit, nam Dominum Jesum Christum sibi sæpius apparentem, aliquando à Confessariis jussa, qui delusam ab angelo tenebrarum suspicabantur, humiliter irrisit, sprevitque; sed non sine magno

tam profundæ obedientiæ præmio. Quin etiam volumen, quod in Cantica Canticorum insigni pietate refertum, scripserat, ut confessorio obtemperaret flammis injeect. Dicere autem solebat, se in discernendis visionibus ac revelationibus decipi posse; in obedientiâ vero superioribus præstandâ, falli non posse.

10. Paupertatem adeò dilexit, ut non solùm labore manuum suarum victum sibi compararet; sed si quam monialem vilioribus indutam vestimentis conspexisset, illico sua eum illius commutaret; ac si quando sibi necessaria deficerent, mirificè lætaretur et exultaret, gratiasquè Deo ageret, tamquam insigne aliquod consecuta beneficium.

11. Sed inter cæteras ejus virtutes, quibus quasi sponsa à Deo ornata, mirificè excelluit, integerrima effulsit castitas; quam adeò eximie coluit, ut non solum propositum virginitalis servandæ à pueritiâ concepit, usque ad mortem perduxerit, sed omnis expertem maculæ, angelicam in corpore et corde servaverit puritatem.

12. Quas adeò insignes virtutes mirificè humilitate cordis ornabat, eum etenim in dies divinis charismatibus anima ejus impingeretur, sæpius exclamabat ad Dominum, ut beneficiis in eam suis terminum statueret; nec tam citò ingentium seclerum oblivisceretur.

13. Contumelias vero et irrisiones ardentissimè sitiebat, ac non solùm humanos honores, sed nosei quoque ab hominibus abhorrebat.

14. Invictam autem hujus sanctæ virginis patientiam illa vox attestatur, quæ sæpius ad Dominum exclamabat, "Domine, aut pati, aut mori!"

15. Præter hæc omnia divinæ beneficentæ munera, quibus hanc dilectam suam, quasi pretiosis monilibus decoratam, esse voluit Omnipotens, aliis etiam gratiis et donis abundè ipsam locupletavit: adimplevit enim eam spiritu intelligentiæ, ut non solum bonorum operum in Ecclesiâ Dei exempla relinqueret, sed et illam cœlestis sapientiæ imbribus irrigaret, editis de mysticâ theologiâ, aliisque etiam multâ pietate refertis libellis, ex quibus fidelium mentes uberrimos fructus percipiunt, et ad supernæ patriæ desiderium maximè excitantur.

16. Quibus cœlestibus instructa ac illustrata muneribus, opus aggressa est maximum quidem, et cuiusque difficillimum, sed Ecclesiæ Christi perquam utile ac commodum: reformationem enim exorsa est ordinis Carmelitani, illud quoque non solum in mulieribus, sed in viris egregiè præstitit.

17. Ædificatis non modò per universas Hispanias, sed et per alias etiam Christiani orbis partes tam virorum, quàm mulierum monasteriis, sine pecuniâ, sine proventibus, de solâ Dei misericordiâ præsumens; nec modò omnibus humanis destituta auxiliis, sed adversantibus plerumque ac contradicentibus principibus et potestatibus sæculi: quæ tamen, Domino opus suum confirmante, radices miserunt, incrementum suscepunt, et demum in domo Dei uberes proventus fructificaverunt.

18. Tantas virtutes Theresiæ, plurimis, dum adhuc in humanis ageret, miraculis Deus illustravit; quorum nonnulla præsentibus literis duximus inserenda. Cùm in Conchensi diœcesi maxima esset frumenti penuria, atque in monasterio de Villa Nova de Zara vix tantum farinæ reperiretur, ut per integrum mensem ad victum decem et octo monialium satis esset; hujus sanctæ virginis meritis et intercessionem, Deus omnipotens qui sperantes in se enutrit, eam ad eò abundare fecit, ut quamvis per sex menses ex eâ affatim panes ad refectionem ancillarum Dei fierent, nunquam tamen usque ad novas fruges diminueretur. Gravi erysipilate in vultu, ac febre afflictabatur Anna à Trinitate, monialis conventus Medinæ de Campo, cui Theresia primùm blandita, deinde læsa membra leviter attrahens, “Bono animo,” inquit, “sis filia: Deus, ut spero, te hoc modo liberabit;” statimque febris, omnisque morbus ab eâ abcessit. Alberta, ejusdem monasterii priorissa, pleuritide ac febre, non absque vitæ periculo, laborabat. At sancta virgo Theresia, tacto latere, quod morbo urgebatur, eam sanam esse pronuntiavit ac surgere jussit; illa perfectè sanata statim è lecto exiit laudans Deum.

19. Adveniente demum tempore, quo pro tot laboribus pro divino honore exhaustis, ac tot bonis operibus in Ecclesiæ utilitatem perpetratis, coronam decoris de manu Dei esset receptura, gravi morbo Albæ decumbens, cum toto infirmi-

tatis tempore frequentes, ac plene admirabiles de divinâ charitate cum sororibus sermones habuisset, sæpius gratias Deo agens, quod se Catholicæ Ecclesiæ aggregasset, commendans, tanquam præcipua bona, paupertatem, ac debitam præpositis obedientiam; accepto humillimè ac cum cœlesti prorsus charitate sacro peregrinationis suæ viatico, ac extremæ unctionis sacramento, Christi crucifixi effigiem manu tenens, ad cœlestem Patriam evolavit.

20. Pluribus verò signis manifestavit Deus quàm sublimem gloriæ gradum Therisiæ elargitus in cœlis esset; multæ etenim moniales, religiosæ, ac timentes Deum, viderunt decorem gloriæ ejus. Alia etenim conspexit supra tectum ecclesiæ et in choro, et super decumbentis cubiculum multitudinem cœlestium luminarium; alia Christum Dominum magno coruscantem splendore, et ingenti angelorum frequentia circumdatum, ejus lecto assistentem; alia plurimos albis amictos vestibus ipsius cellam ingredientem, ac cubile circumfusus; quædam etiam in ipso transitus momento candidam columbam ex ipsius ore in cœlum evolantem; alia, splendorem, crystalli instar, fenestrâ egredientem vidit; quin etiam quædam arbor calce ac macerie obstructa, ac jamdudum arida, quæ cubiculo proxima erat, præter omnem temporis et naturæ rationem, repentè floribus onusta. In ipsâ transitus horâ apparuit corpus exanime, specioissimum ac nullâ rugâ contractum, ac miro decoratum candore apparuit, ac unâ cum vestibus ac linteolis, quibus ægra usa erat, omnibus admirantibus, mirificè spirans odorem. Multa etiam magnalia, quæ meritis ancillæ suæ operatus est Deus, ipsius in paradysum transitum exultabilem reddiderunt. Quædam etiam monialis dudum capitis et oculorum infirmitate laborans, apprehensâ mortuæ virginis manu, ac capiti oculisque admotâ, statim convaluit: altera item ejus osculatis pedibus, sensum odoratus amissum recuperavit, et corporaliter odorem unguentorum, quo sacrosanctum ejus corpus à Domino perfusum erat, percepit; corpus ejus absque ullo prorsus medicamine ligneo loculo inclusum, altè effossâ ad sepulturam humo, ac ingentibus lapidibus et calce oppletâ, scrobe sepultum est; sed è sepulchro ejus odor adeò ingens ac mirificus emanabat, ut decretum fuerit, sacrum corpus exhumari; atque illud sanè inte-

grum, ac incorruptum, ac flexibile, ac si nuper tumultatum fuisset, repertum fuit, odorato liquore circumfusus, quo perenniter usque in præsentem diem, Deo ancillæ suæ sanctitatem jugi miraculo attestante, desudat; quare aliis vestibus indutum, novâque arcâ inclusum, cum priora computruissent, eodem loco conditum fuit. Lapsoque triennio, cùm rursus ipsius monumentum aperiretur, ut sacrum pignus Abulam asportaretur; ac deinceps frequenter jussu delegatorum apostolicorum inviseretur, semper incorruptum, ac tractabile, eodem liquore ac odore perfusum apparuit.

21. Sed et procedentibus temporibus, manifestavit Deus hominibus gloriam suam, præstitis per intercessionem ancillæ suæ frequentibus beneficiis his, qui se fideliter ejus precibus commendassent: puer etenim quidam quadriennio adeò contractus ac detortus erat, ut nec pedibus insistere, nec cùm jaceret movere posset, eaque infirmitas, cum illi à nativitate fuisset, nullumque afferret doloris sensum, incurabilis prorsus videbatur, cùmque per novem dies ad cubiculum, quod vivens Sancta Virgo inhabitaverat allatus fuisset, sensit in se virtutem venientem: ac repentè sanus, ac validus, ac suis pedibus ambulans, stupentibus cunctis, cœpit diffamare se à Matre Theresiâ de Jesu perfectam sanitatem fuisse consequutum. Sævissimis doloribus per biennium cruciabatur Anna à Sancto Michaelē monialis, tribus chaneris pectus ejus adeò affligentibus, ut non solum solemnī expers esset, sed nec collum flectere, nec brachia posset attollere; cùmque particulam reliquiarum Sanctæ Theresiæ super pectus apposuisset, et toto cordis effectū se ejus patrociniū commendasset, non solum omnis evanuit plaga à corpore ejus, sed et aliā etiam, quam in corde diu habuerat, infirmitate libera, momento temporis effecta. Adeò vexabatur Franciscus Perez, parochialis ecclesiæ rector à postemate, quod in os pectoris insederat ut brachio etiam contracto, à celebratione sacrosancti missæ sacrificiī per quinque menses impediretur, humanisque remediis deficientibus, ad divina confugit, et ad montes Dei elevans oculos, salutem consequutus est ejus partis sanitatem; cumque deinde sepulchrum virginis visitasset, ejusque brachium, quod Albæ asservatur, proprio brachio, quod adhuc contractum erat, admovisset; in eo etiam divinam virtutem

expertus est, restitutâ sibi perfectâ valetudine. Joannes de Leyna, magno gutturi morbo ad eò affligebatur, ut omnis respirationis via fere interclusa esset, jamque morti proximus animam agebat, cùm sudarium, quod Sanctæ Theresiæ fuerat, ad morbi locum magnâ cum fiduciâ opposuit: somnoque captus, ac paulo post experrectus, se meritis Beatæ Theresiæ curatum esse repente sanus exclamavit.

22. Cùm igitur per universas jam gentes et nationes sanctitas Theresiæ celebraretur, et nomen ipsius ad Christi fideles magno in honore esset, operante Domino per intercessionem ejus tot mirabilia, quæ etiam in dies unâ cum ipsius veneratione augebantur, fuerunt auctoritate apostolicâ in multis Hispaniæ partibus formati processus, ac ad Sanctam Sedem transmissi.

23. Et instantè agente claræ memoriæ Philippo III., Hispaniæ Rege Catholico, negotio tam in Sacrà Rituum Congregatione, quàm in Rotâ diligenter discusso, Paulus V. prædecessor noster indulsit, ut in ejus honorem, tamquam de Beatâ Virgine divinum officium in toto fratrum Carmelitanorum ordine posset celebrari. Cùmque idem Philippus Rex, iterum apud prædictum Paulum similiter prædecessorem nostrum, pro canonizatione B. Virginis Theresiæ supplicasset, idem Paulus iterum negotium commisit Cardinalibus Sanctæ Rituum Congregationis, qui novos processus auctoritate apostolicâ conficiendos decreverunt; atque ad id munus peragendum, Bernardum Cardinalem de Royas Archiepiscopum Toletanum, et Venerabiles Fratres Episcopos Abulen et Salamantin, eâdem auctoritate deputarunt; qui cùm diligenter de mandato negotio perfuncti essent, omnia acta eidem Paulo V., prædecessori nostri transmiserunt.

24. Qui, tribus apostolici palatii causarum auditoribus Francisco Archiepiscopo Damasceno locum tenente, nunc S. R. E. Cardinali; Joanni Baptistæ Caccino Decano; et Alphonso Manzanedo dedit in mandatis, ut summâ cum diligentia dicta acta examinarent, et quæ eorum sententia esset, ad ipsum referrent. Qui omnibus accuratè, prout rei magnitudo postulabat, perpensis, eidem Paulo V. prædecessori retulerunt, plenè justificari vitæ sanctitatem ac miracula Beatæ Virginis Theresiæ, omniaque abundè constare, quæ

pro canonizatione ejusdem à sacr. canonibus requiruntur, posseque ad ulteriora procedi.

25. Utque eâ maturitate, quæ rem tantam decebat, negotium transigeretur, idem Paulus dilectis filiis nostris S. R. E. Cardinalibus Sacris Ritibus præfectis ordinavit, ut prædictos processus quàm diligentissimè rursus inspicerent, ac de totâ causâ accuratè cognoscerent.

26. Cùm vero idem Paulus humanæ peregrinationis viam complevisset, nosque (nullis licet nostris meritis) solâ divinæ gratiæ dignatione ad Ecclesiæ gubernacula vocati essemus, ad augmentum divini honoris, et sanctæ Ecclesiæ utilitatem pertinere arbitrati sumus, ut hujusmodi negotium promoveretur; plurimum etiam ad præsentium temporum calamitatem levandam interesse existimavimus, si Christi fidelium devotio erga sanctos et electos Dei, qui pro nobis in tantis necessitatibus intercederent, augeretur, mandavimus itaque prædictis Cardinalibus, ut quod illis à prædecessore nostro prædicto fuerat injunctum quàm-primum exequerentur.

27. Quod cùm illi eâ diligentia, quâ decebat, perfecissent, ac pro S. Virginis canonizatione omnes unanimiter censuissent, venerabilis frater noster Franciscus Maria Epis. Portuen. cardinalis à Monte, totius processus summam, ac suam collegarumque sententiam coram nobis in Consistorio nostro exposuit: quibus auditis, reliqui Cardinales, qui aderant ad ulteriora fore procedendum communi suffragio pronuntiarunt.

28. Igitur cùm in publico Consistorio dilectus filius Joannes Baptista Mellinus, Consistorialis Aulæ nostræ advocatus, pro ejus canonizatione perorasset, ac nomine charissimi in Christo filii nostri, Philippi, Hispaniarum Regis Catholici, ut ad eam procedere dignaremur, humiliter supplicasset, nos de tantâ re venerabiles fratres nostros S. R. E. Cardinales, et Episcopos in curiâ præsentibus consultores esse respondimus; atque interim Cardinales atque Episcopos præsentibus vehementer in visceribus Christi hortati sumus, ut orationibus instantes, in jejuniis et eleemosynis animas suas coram Deo nobiscum humiliantes, preces à Deo Patre luminum exposcerent, ut ex alto super nos lucem suam, et veritatem suam emitteret, quæ nos ad voluntatem et beneplacitum ejus cognoscendum et perficiendum deduceret. Itaque cum semi-

publico Consistorio, quod consequenter celebratum est, vocatis non modo Cardinalibus, sed patriarchis, archiepiscopis, et episcopis in curiâ nostrâ existentibus, præsentibus etiam nostris ac Sedis Apostolicæ nostariis, ac sacri palatii apostolici causarum, auditoribus, cum plura à nobis de eximiâ sanctitate ancillæ Dei, ac miraculorum frequentiâ et celebritate, populorumque erga eam per universas Christianas nationes devotione, commemorata fuissent, expositis etiam instantiis, quæ coram nobis non modo nomine maximorum regum, sed etiam charissimi in Christo filii nostri Ferdinandi, Romanorum Regis in imperatorem electi, aliorumque complurium Christianorum principum fiebant omnes concorditer; ac uno ore benedicentes Deum, amicos suos honorificantem, Beatam Theresiam canonizandam esse, atque inter sanctas virgines adscribendam censuerunt, quorum omnium audito consensu, intimo cordis affectu exultavimus in Domino, et jubilavimus in salutari ejus gratias agentes Deo, et Filio ejus Domino nostro Jesu Christo, quòd Ecclesiam misericorditer respexisset, ac tantâ gloriâ illustrare decrevisset; canonizationis itaque publicavimus diem, eosdemque fratres ac filios nostros monuimus, ut in orationibus et eleemosynis perseverarent, ut in tanto opere exequendo splendor Domini Dei nostri esset super nos, qui opus manuum nostrarum ad perficiendam ejus voluntatem dirigeret. Denum peractis omnibus, quæ ex sac. Constitutionibus, ac Romanæ Sanctæ Ecclesiæ consuetudine peragenda erant, hodie in Sacrosanctâ Principis Apostolorum Basilicâ, cum venerabilibus fratribus nostris S. R. E. Cardinalibus, necnon patriarchis, archiepiscopis, et episcopis, Romanæque curiæ prælatis, officialibus et familiaribus nostris, clero sæculari et regulari, ac maximâ populi frequentiâ, convenimus, ubi repetitis pro canonizationis Decreto petitionibus nomine ejusdem charissimi in Christo filii nostri Philippi Regis Catholici, à dilecto filio nostro Ludovico Tit. Sanctæ Mariæ Transpontinæ Cardinali Ludovisio nuncupato, nostro secundum carnem nepote, per Nicolaum Zambeccarium, Consistorialis Aulæ nostræ advocatum prædictum; decantatis sacris precibus, et litiis, ac Spiritus Sancti gratiâ humiliter imploratâ: ad honorem sanctæ et individuae Trinitatis, et fidei Catholicæ exaltatio-

nem; auctoritate omnipotentis Dei Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti, BB. Apostolorum, ac nostrâ, de venerabilium fratrum nostrorum Sanctæ Romanæ Ecclesiæ Cardinalium, patriarcharum, archiepis., episcop. in Romanâ curiâ præsentium consilio, ac unanimi consensu; Theresiam Virginem de Abula, de cujus vitæ sanctitate, fidei sinceritate, et miraculorum excellentiâ plenè constabat, et constat, ac sanctam esse definimus, ac sanctarum virginum catalogo adscribendam decrevimus, prout præsentium tenore definimus, decernimus, et adscribimus, illamque universos Christi fideles tamquam verè sanctam honorare et venerari mandavimus, et mandamus; statuentes, ut ab universali Ecclesiâ in ejus honorem Ecclesiæ, et altaria in quibus sacrificia Deo offerantur, ædificari et consecrari, et singulis omnibus die quintâ Octobris, quoad cœlestem gloriam translata est, ejus officium, ut de Sanctâ Virgine ad præscriptum Romani Breviarii celebrari possit.

29. Eâdemque auctoritate omnibus Christo fidelibus verè pœnitentibus et confessis, qui annis singulis eodem festo die ad sepulchrum, in quo corpus ejus requiescit, visitandum accesserint, unum annum et unam quadragenam; iis vero, qui in ejusdem festi octavâ, quadraginta dies de injunctis eis, seu quo modo libet debitis pœnitentiis misericorditer in Domino relaxavimus, ac relaxamus.

30. Postremò, gratiis Deo actis, quòd Ecclesiam suam insigni hoc, novoque luminari illustrare dignatus esset, decantatâ in Sanctæ Theresiæ honorem solemnî sanctarum virginum oratione, ad altare principis Apostolorum missam celebravimus, cum ejusdem Sanctæ Virginis commemoratione, omnibusque Christi fidelibus tunc præsentibus plenariam omnium peccatorum suorum indulgentiam concessimus.

31. Decet igitur, ut pro tam insigni beneficio omnes cum omni humilitate benedicamus, et glorificemus eum, quem decet omnis benedictio, et honor, et gloria, et potestas in sæcula sæculorum, assiduis precibus ab eo postulantes, ut per intercessionem electæ suæ à peccatis nostris faciem suam avertens, misereatur nostri, et respiciat nos, et ostendat nobis lucem misericordiarum suarum, et inmittat timorem suum super gentes, quæ non cognoverunt eum, ut cognoscant, quia non est alius Deus, nisi Deus noster.

32. Cæterum, quia difficile foret, præsentēs nostras literas ad singula loca, ubi opus esset, deferri, volumus, ut earum exemplis etiam impressis, manu publici notarii subscriptis, et sigillo alicujus personæ in dignitate ecclesiasticâ constitutæ munitis, eadem ubique fides habeatur, quæ ipsis præsentibus adhiberetur, si essent exhibitæ, vel ostensæ.

33. Nulli ergo omninò hominum liceat hanc paginam nostrorum definitionis, decreti, adscriptionis, mandati, statuti, relaxationis, et voluntatis infringere, vel ei ausu temerario contraire. Si quis autem hoc attentare præsumpserit, indignationem omnipotentis Dei, ac beatorum Petri et Pauli apostolorum ejus, se noverit incursurum.

Datum Romæ, apud sanctum Petrum, anno Incarnationis Dominicæ millesimo sexcentesimo vigesimo primo, quarto Id. Martii, pontificatus nostri anno secundo.

+ Ego GREGORIUS, Catholicæ Ecclesiæ Episcopus.

No. IV.

The following sublime Hymn is supposed to have been composed by the Saint after receiving the B. Sacrament. There is an old translation of it in French by Père Cyprian, but it will not bear any comparison with the translation of Monsieur De la Monnoye, which I subjoin, together with the original Spanish. The hymn is called in Spanish "Glosa," which is a species of Spanish poetry, so named, because it is as it were an explanation (or gloss) of certain verses called the Text, which are placed at the head of the piece. The last verse of the text is repeated in every stanza.

TEXTO.

Vivo sin vivir en mí,
Y tan alta vida espero,
Que muero porque no muero.

GLOSA.

I.

Aquesta divina union
Del amor con que yo vivo
Haze á Dios ser mi cautivo,
Y libre mi caraçon ;
Mas causa en mí tal passion
Ver á Dios mi prisionero,
Que muero porque no muero.

II.

Ay! qué larga es esta vida!
Que duros estos destierros,
Esta cárcel y estos hierros,
En que el alma esta metida!
Solo esperar la salida
Me causa un dolor tan fiero,
Que muero porque no muero.

III.

Ay! que vida tan amarga
Dó no se goza el Señor!
Y si es dulce el amor,
No lo es la esperança larga:
Quite me Dios esta carga,
Mas pesada que de azero;
Que muero porque no muero.

IV.

Solo con la confiança
Vivo de que he de morir,
Porque muriendo el vivir
Me asegura mi esperança.
Muerte dó el vivir se alcança,
No te tardes, que te espero;
Que muero porque no muero.

TEXTE.

Je vis, mais c'est en Dieu qui vient de me nourrir,
 Et j'attends dans le Ciel une si belle vie,
 Que, pour contenter mon envie,
 Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir.

GLOSE.

I.

Dieu s'unissant à moi par un heureux mélange,
 Fait sentir à mon cœur son amour pur et vif.
 Je suis libre, il est mon captif,
 C'est lui qui sous mes lois de lui-même se range.
 Quoi, mons Dieu, mon captif! Ah! le puis-je souffrir?
 Dans ce renversement étrange,
Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir.

II.

Oh! qu'il me reste encore une longue carrière!
 Que cet exil est dur qui m'arrête en ces lieux!
 Que le séjour est ennuyeux,
 Qui retient dans les fers mon âme prisonnière,
 Attendant que la mort vienne me secourir!
 Mais ignorant l'heure dernière,
Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir.

III.

La vie est à mon goût d'une amertume extrême;
 Est-ce vivre, Seigneur, que de vivre sans vous?
 Si l'amour que je sens est doux,
 Le terme de l'attente, hélas! n'est pas de même.
 Ce faix rude et pesant m'empêche de courir,
 Et toujours loin de ce que j'aime,
Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir.

IV.

Je fonde sur la morte toute mon espérance.
 L'arrêt qui limita le compte de nos jours,
 Sitôt qu'il en tranche le cours,
 D'un meilleur avenir nous donne l'assurance.
 Mort, dont le coup propice exempte de périr,
 Hâte-toi pour ma délivrance.
Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir.

V.

Mira que el amor es fuerte ;
Vida, no me seas molesta,
Mira, que solo te resta,
Para gozarte, perderte.
Venga ya la dulce muerte,
Venga el morir muy ligero ;
Que muero porque no muero.

VI.

Aquella vida de arriba,
Es la vida verdadera ;
Hasta aqui esta vida muera
No se goza estando viva.
Muerte, no me seas esquivia ;
Vivo muriendo primero,
Que muero porque no muero.

VII.

Viva que puedo yo darle
A mi Dios que vive en mi,
Sino es perderte á ti,
Para mejor á el gozarle ?
Quiero muriendo alcançarle,
Pues á el solo es el que quiero ;
Que muero porque no muero.

VIII.

Estanda ausente de ti,
Qué vida puedo tener
Sino muerte padecer
La mayor que nunca vi ?
Lástima tengo de mi,
Por ser mi mal tan entero,
Que muero porque no muero.

IX.

El pez que del agua sale
Aun de alivio no carece ;
A quien la muerte padece,
Al fin la muerte le vale.

V.

Fol amour des mortels, trop dangereuse vie,
 Un autre amour plus noble et plus puissant que toi,
 Armé de courage et de foi,
 Your mieux me faire vivre, à mourir me convie ;
 Ta perte est le salut où je dois recourir ;
 Que ne m'es-tu bientôt ravie !
Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir.

VI.

La vie habite au Ciel, heureux qui l'y peut suivre ;
 Faisons pour la trouver un généreux effort ;
 Ici la vie est une mort,
 Dont la mort cependant à la fin nous délivre ;
 Approche, douce mort, qu'on ne peut trop chérir :
 Dans l'ardeur de mourir pour vivre,
Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir.

VII.

Vie humaine, trésor qu'à tout autre on préfère,
 Si mon Dieu vit en moi, si je vis en mon Dieu,
 Craindrai-je de te dire adieu ?
 Et la mort à ce prix me sera-t-elle amère ?
 C'est un bien qu'elle seule a droit de m'acquérir ;
 Pourquoi faut-il qu'elle diffère ?
Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir.

VIII.

Absente de mon Dieu, je languis triste et sombre,
 Qu'est-ce que je puis voir où je ne le vois pas !
 Ma vie est un affreux trépas :
 Mon jour est une nuit et ma lumière une ombre ;
 La source de mes maux sans lui ne peut tarir :
 Lasse d'en voir croître le nombre,
Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir.

IX.

Le poisson, qui se meurt sorti du sein de l'onde,
 Trouve au moins dans sa mort la fin de son tourment,
 Mourir est un contentement
 A qui traîne une vie en supplices féconde.

Qué muerte avrá que se yguale
A mi vivir lastimero ?
Que muero porque no muero.

X.

Quando me empieço en aliviar,
Viendo en el Sacramento,
Me haze mas sentimiento
El no poderte gozar.
Todo es para mas penar,
Por no verte como quiero ;
Que muero porque no muero.

XI.

Quando me gozo, Señor,
Con esperança de verte,
Viendo que puedo perderte,
Se me dobla mi dolor ;
Viviendo en tanto pavor,
Y esperando como espero :
Que muero porque no muero.

XII.

Sácame de aquesta muerte,
Mi Dios, y dame la vida ;
No me tengas impedida
En este lazo tan fuerte,
Mira que muero por verte,
Y vivir sin ti no puedo,
Que muero porque no muero.

XIII.

Lloraré mi muerte ya
Y lamentaré mi vida,
En tanto que detenida
Por mis pecados está.
O mi Dios, quando será,
Quando yo diga de vera :
Que muero porque no muero.

Trop sûre que le temps ne sert qu'à les aigrir,
 Vive ensemble et morte en ce monde,
Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir.

X.

En vain pour soulager les transports de mon âme,
 Je vous cherche, Seigneur, sur vos sacrés autels ;
 Invisible aux yeux des mortels,
 Vous suspendez ma joie, et redoublez ma flamme.
 Ce n'est qu'après la mort qu'on peut vous découvrir.
 Viens donc, ô mort que je réclame !
Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir !

XI.

Vous le savez, mon Dieu, lorsque je vous possède,
 A peine, puis-je, hélas ! un moment vous garder,
 Qu'au plaisir de vous posséder
 La crainte de vous perdre aussitôt ne succède.
 Il n'est que le trépas qui m'en puisse guérir.
 Mourons, c'est l'unique remède.
Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir !

XII.

Mettez fin, mon Sauveur, à ma longue agonie ;
 Sans vous je ne puis vivre, et je meurs pour vous voir ;
 Ne retardez plus mon espoir,
 Rompez, brisez les fers d'une âme assez punie.
 Il est temps qu'à mes cris le Ciel se laisse ouvrir.
 Brûlant de m'y voir réunie,
Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir !

XIII.

Mais non, je dois, Seigneur, pour apaiser votre ire,
 De ma vivante mort prolonger les douleurs.
 Je dois, les yeux baignés de larmes,
 Expier mes forfaits par un juste martyre.
 Ah ! quand si vivement pourrai-je m'attendrir,
 Qu'il soit enfin vrai de vous dire :
Je me meurs de regret de ne pouvoir mourir !

DE LA MONNOYE.

No. V.

CANTICLE OF ST. TERESA AFTER COMMUNION.

Translated by the REV. FATHER CASWALL.

VIVO SIN VIVIR EN MI.

TEXT.

I live, but from myself am far away ;
 And hope to reach a life so high,
 That I'm forever dying because I do not die !

GLOSS.

I.

THIS union of divinest love,
 By which I live a life above,
 Setting my heart at liberty,
 My God to me enchains ;
 But then to see His Majesty
 In such a base captivity !
 It so my spirit pains,
 That evermore I weep and sigh,
 Dying because I do not die.

II.

Ah ! what a length does life appear !
 How hard to bear this exile here !
 How hard from weary day to day
 To pine without relief !
 The yearning hope to break away
 From this my prison-house of clay,
 Inspires so sharp a grief,
 That overcome I weep and sigh,
 Dying because I do not die.

III.

Oh! what a bitter life is this,
Deprived of God its only bliss!
And what though love delicious be,
Not so is hope deferr'd.
Ah! then, dear Lord! in charity,
This iron weight of misery
From my poor soul ungird;
For evermore I weep and sigh,
Dying because I do not die.

IV.

This only gives me life and strength,
To know that die I must at length;
For hope insures me bliss divine,
Through death, and death alone.
O Death! for thee, for thee I pine!
Sweet Death! of life the origin!
Ah, wing thee hither soon;
For evermore I weep and sigh,
Dying because I do not die.

V.

And thou, fond Life, oh! vex me not,
By still prolonging here my lot;
But know that love is urging me;
Know that the only way
To gain thee, is—by losing thee!
Come then, O Death! come speedily,
And end thy long delay;
For evermore I weep and sigh,
Dying because I do not die.

VI.

The life above, the life on high,
Alone is life in verity;
Nor can we life at all enjoy,
Till this poor life is o'er;

Then, O sweet Death! no longer fly
 From me, who, ere my time to die,
 Am dying evermore;
 For evermore I weep and sigh,
 Dying because I do not die.

VII.

To Him who deigns in me to live,
 What better gift have I to give,
 O my poor earthly life! than thee?
 Too glad of thy decay;
 So but I may the sooner see
 That face of sweetest Majesty,
 For which I pine away;
 While evermore I weep and sigh,
 Dying because I do not die.

VIII.

Absent from Thee, my Saviour dear!
 I call not life this living here;
 But a long dying agony,
 The sharpest I have known;
 And I myself, myself to see
 In such a rack of misery,
 For very pity moan;
 And ever, ever weep and sigh,
 Dying because I do not die.

IX.

The fish that from the brook is ta'en
 Soon finds an end of all its pain
 And agonies the worst to bear
 Are soonest spent and o'er;
 But what acutest death can e'er
 With this my painful life compare
 In torture evermore?
 While evermore I weep and sigh,
 Dying because I do not die.

X.

When in the Sacred Host I see,
My God! thy hidden Majesty,
And peace is soothing my sad heart—
Then comes redoubled pain,
To think, that here from Thee apart.
I cannot see Thee as Thou art,
But gaze and gaze in vain;
While evermore I weep and sigh,
Dying because I do not die.

XI.

When with the hope I comfort me,
At least in Heav'n of seeing Thee,
The thought that I may lose Thee yet,
With anguish thrills me through;
And by a thousand fears beset,
My very hope inspires regret,
And multiplies my woe;
While evermore I weep and sigh,
Dying because I do not die.

XII.

Ah, Lord! my light and living breath!
Take me, oh take me from this death!
And burst the bars that sever me
From my true life above;
Think how I die thy face to see,
And cannot live away from Thee,
O my eternal Love!
And ever, ever weep and sigh,
Dying because I do not die.

XIII.

I weary of this endless strife;
I weary of this dying life;—
This living death—this heavy chain;—
This torment of delay,

In which her sins my soul detain ;
 Ah ! when shall it be mine ? Ah ! when,
 With my last breath to say,
 “ No more I weep—no more I sigh ;
 I’m dying of desire to die ?”

No. VI.

TO THE REVEREND FATHER PEDRO IBANEZ.

Jesus and Mary.

The Holy Ghost be always with your Reverence ! Amen.

It would not be amiss to exaggerate to your Reverence this service of mine, in order to oblige you the more to take particular care to recommend me to God. And this I could do well, seeing it has cost me so dear to see myself in writing, and thus to have brought to my remembrance so many of my miseries, though I can say with truth that I have experienced more reluctance in mentioning the favors our Lord has shown me, than the offences I have committed against His divine majesty. I have done what your Reverence has commanded me—to enter into more particulars ; but upon this condition, that your Reverence also will perform what you promised me—to tear up whatever you do not approve of. I had not finished the perusal of it, after I had written it, when your Reverence sent for it ; hence it is very likely that some things are not mentioned as they should be, and other things I may have repeated twice ; for the time I had was so short, that I could not review what I had written. I beseech your Reverence to correct it, and to command it to be transcribed—if it must be sent to Father Avila, otherwise some one may know the hand.

I am very desirous such arrangements may be made—that he may see what I have written, since I began to write the account of my life with this intention. If he shall judge that I am going on in a good way, there will be no more to

be done on my part. Your Reverence must act in everything as you think proper: consider that you are bound to one, who trusts her soul in your hands in so confidential a manner. Your soul I will recommend to our Lord all the days of my life, and therefore make haste to serve God, that you may be able to obtain a favor for me from Him. Your Reverence will easily see (by what is now sent to you) how well you are employed in giving yourself wholly to Him (as your Reverence has already begun to do so) who gives Himself to us without any reserve at all. May He be blessed forever! for I hope, in His mercy, that both your Reverence and myself may see ourselves one day in that place—where we shall understand more clearly the great mercies He has been pleased to show us both, and where we shall praise Him for all eternity. Amen.

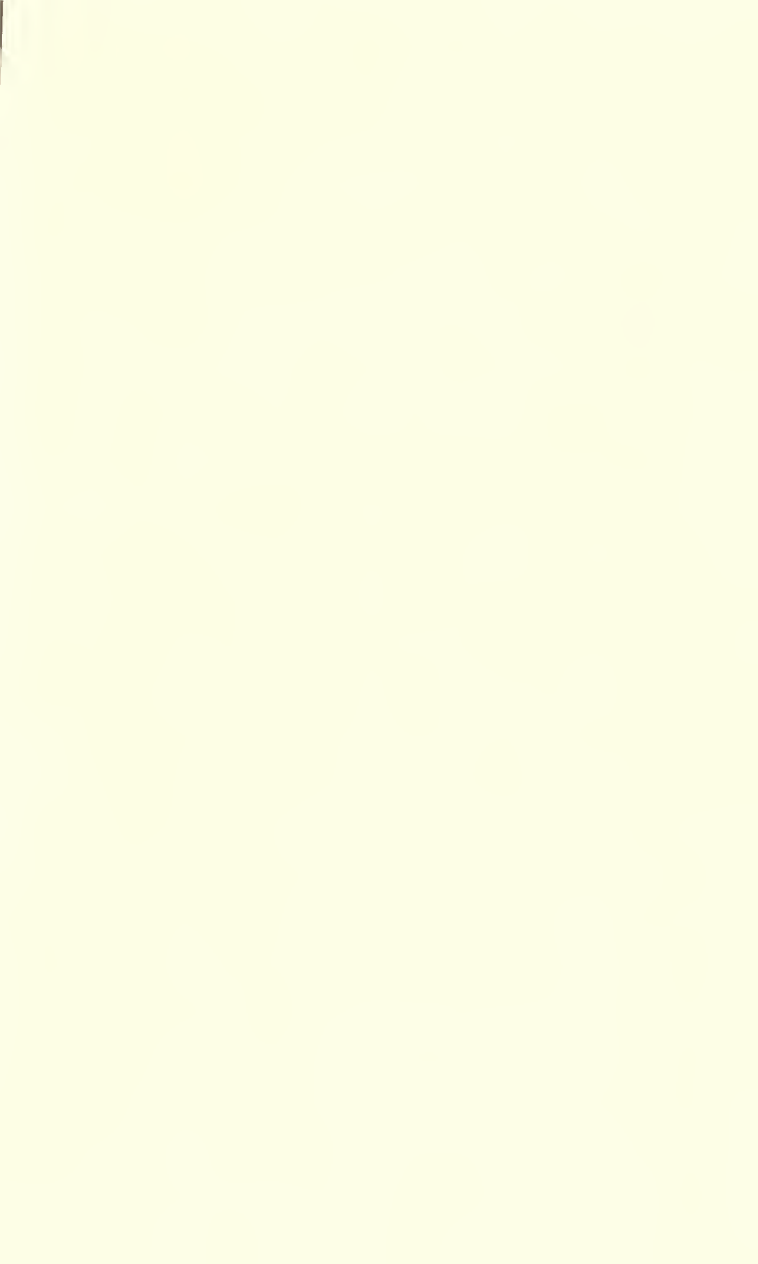
Your Reverence's unworthy Servant,

TERESA DE JESU.

N. B.—The saint began to write her life at Avila, in 1561; she completed it at Toledo the following year. By the command of her confessor she soon after divided it into chapters, and added "The History of the Foundation of St. Joseph's Convent at Avila."—(See the "Bollandists," Oct. 15, p. 447, &c.)

FINIS.

275051



BX 4700 .T4 A2 1860b SMC

Teresa, of Avila, Saint.
1515-1582
Life of Saint Teresa
47078324

